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# THOSE ANCIENT LANDS

BOOKS BY LOUIS GOLDING

\*

NOVELS

Forward from Babylon  
Seacoast of Bohemia  
Day of Atonement  
Store of Ladies  
The Miracle Boy

VERSE

Sorrow of War  
Shepherd Singing Ragtime  
Prophet and Fool

TRAVEL

Sunward, being Adventures  
in Italy  
Sicilian Noon  
Those Ancient Lands, being  
A Journey to Palestine





LOUIS GOLDING

*(After the painting by Edward Wolfe)*

*Frontispiece*



THOSE ANCIENT LANDS

BEING

A Journey to  
Palestine

BY

LOUIS GOLDING

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LONDON

Ernest Benn Limited



First Published in

1 9 2 8

Printed

in

Gt. Britain

For Daisy Kennedy  
*And her Music*

\*

For John Drinkwater  
*And his Poetry*

*O drunken not with wine,  
Whose sins and sorrows have fulfilled  
the sum—  
Be not afraid, arise, be no more dumb ;  
Arise, shine,  
For thy light is come.*

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.



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## FOREWORD

THIS is the tale of a journey along those ancient lands whose citadel is Zion. I have thought it fitting to begin my tale in the Island of the Lotus-Eaters, where I found my people more secretly walled from Zion than anywhere in all the lands of my wandering. Djerba stands aloof and enchanted, spiritually as remote from Zion as from Labrador. Eastward lies Egypt. I do not resist the temptation of approaching Zion by Egypt, for my people have done it before. I abide neither here nor there as long as they, which is their fault as much as mine. They have made a wanderer of me. The steamer which is to bear me across the Atlantic, to those modern lands, is drawn up alongside of the King Albert Dock. The siren hoots sternly. Or, in a fortnight, to be precise, the siren will be hooting sternly. None the less I will find my way again to Gideon's water in Esdraelon and the flowers banked up in petrol tins in a poor man's garden in Nazareth.

L. G.



CHAPTER I  
LOTUS AND MANNA

I DO not possess the ingenuity and scholarship of those German savants who demonstrate that Homer and Shakespeare were pure Germans ; and I will therefore not try, as I am tempted, to prove that Odysseus was a pure Jew. It may seem unnecessarily modest on my part, for there is a school of Jewish writers whom no difficulty prevents from proving that any Gentile possessed of any virtue is a Jew and any Jew possessed of any vice is a Gentile. For my own part, I am content to hail Odysseus as the most Jewish of Greek heroes. And I should like to claim the Odyssey as a poetic pattern of the Dispersion.

It is possible that such a thought would not have imposed itself upon me if fate had made of me a quiet clerk in London or a fervent seller of sewing-machines in Cincinnati. But waking last Spring in my vaulted bedroom in the island of Djerba, off the coast of Tunisia, it occurred to me suddenly that I, a humble Jewish wanderer, had at length fulfilled the circuit of Odysseus's wanderings ; for Djerba, the island of the Lotophagi, had been the only island of his tribulations whither my vagrant sail had not yet impelled me. I had bathed from that desperate strand in Ischia where Circe converted the sailors into swine. I had plucked

rosemary in the island where the sirens sang. I had climbed the fumy volcanoes of Lipari, where Æolus delivered the bag of winds. I had plucked the scarlet anemones of Ithaca, the beginning and end of his journeys.

It was only to the island of the Lotophagi, the Lotus-Eaters, I had not penetrated, the outer limit of his perils, and the most sinister of them all. For here the Lotophagi dwelt, that quiet people, who offered not death to the sailors of Odysseus, but oblivion. "Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of his homeward way."

It was those words that most of all jangled in my head when I awoke that morning of Rámadán, to the near cry of the muezzin on his minaret and the loud boom of the gun on the yellow shore. I had come to Djerba that I, too, might eat the lotus. And I met a forgotten community of Jews that had been eating lotus for two thousand years.

True that nowhere upon the diverse tempest-twisted tracks of the Odyssey had I not met Jews—whether they drank *Asti Spumante* in Capri or *rezzinato* in Ithaca, that careful distillation from glue and turpentine. But here in Djerba I had met the Jewish Lotus-Eaters; I saw them immured in ghettos more impregnable than the sunken fortresses of Verdun—more impregnable because the bastions consisted of no more than a string slung between two twigs which

they themselves had suspended. The air was heavy with the insidious enchantment of lotus.

So it was that the thought came to me, not that Odysseus was a Jew, but that he was the most Jewish of the Greeks ; not that the Odyssey was to be confused with the forty-year wanderings of the pastoral Jews in the stark desert, but that it was a pattern of the adventures of the later Jews, seeking Ithaca, seeking Zion, across a hundred seas, perilous with ogres and seductive with sirens.

A man would need little ingenuity to parallel the incidents of Odysseus's seafaring with the tale of the Jewish exile. Who is Circe but the goddess of stocks and bonds who has converted so many of our most promising sailors into swine. How many different shapes in our history has Polyphemus taken, from Spanish Inquisitor to Tartar Cossack ? How often have we, too, been detained in the island of Calypso, not for years but centuries, offering our bewitched hearts to Parisian intellect, London manners ? Nor is our Odyssey completed. With Ithaca almost in sight, on what island of Phæacia shall we be wrecked again ? And of what nature will the marvellous Phæacian ships be that will carry us home at length ? The golden keel of a Rothschild bequest ? The iron keel of some Napoleonic soldier ? But we are not arrived in Phæacia yet. Our sailors are dispersed. Some are reconnoitring dizzily between Scylla and Charybdis. Some of us stuff our ears with wax or bind our bodies to the mast because of the Gentile siren that bids us lose ourselves upon her mouth. And some are drowsed with the

lotus century beyond century, and are forgetful of the homeward way.

Once or twice a month the *Compagnie de Navigation Olivier* may provide a craft for you, almost as primitive as the galley of *Odysseus* itself, whereon you may proceed to *Djerba*. But I counsel you first to take the long journey by train round the flat, sandy coast by way of *Sousse* and *Sfax* to the oasis of *Gabes*. At *Gabes* you will leave the train and ascend that ramshackle, groaning, public automobile for the south wild lands, that automobile which does not burst into flames more than two or three times a week. Squeezed in all round you on the hard wooden seats, as tight as cattle in a truck, the Arabs in turban and burnous sit upright, the sons of *Ishmael*. Hour beyond burning hour they do not move, they do not speak. Strange how much more dignity is theirs in that stinking box than in any lordly crop-skulled Teuton lolling in his *Mercedes* all the way to *Potsdam*.

You enter now the country of the troglodytes, the dwellers in holes in the ground, whom *Herodotus* on his journeying found here nearly two thousand years ago. Did he find amongst them certain families of Jews, as I did, in the most lightless ghettos of all the five continents? Perhaps not. He records that they fed on "serpents, lizards, and other similar reptiles," which, while they are scaled as the law of *Kosher* prescribes, have splayed, but not cloven, feet. So at length to *Medenine*, the metropolis of the troglodytes, where (it being the Sabbath morning) a praying-shawl may be lent you, if you are a Jew, so that you may recite



your prayers duly in a synagogue more like a mosque than even a conventicle of the Reform Jews is like a Baptist Chapel. Now from Medenine, the Sabbath being over and the automobile not yet being reduced to three buckled wheels and a gear-box, through jackal-haunted dunes, past the forlorn half-buried forum of some unknown Roman city, you snort and thunder to the sea's edge, even to the white miracle of Djerba across the pellucid strait.

I salute you, lovely island of minarets white as a girl's thought, of domes curved and toppling like a wave arrested that moment before the crest splinters into the green trough, of colonnades shady as Eden, of olives transfixed in a silver silence, of bloomy peaches and burning lemons; island of the lotus, I salute you, which seduced the sailors of Odysseus from Ithaca and the progeny of Abraham from Zion.

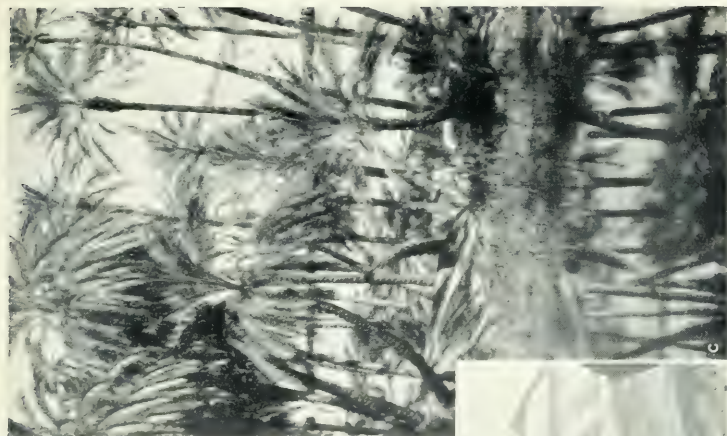
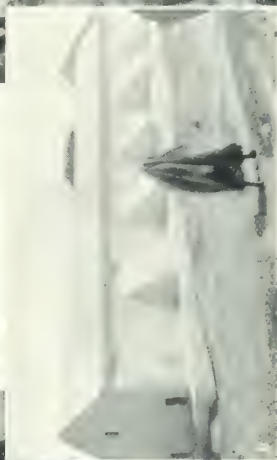
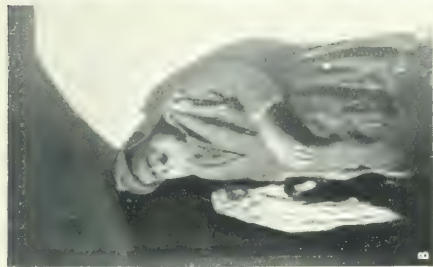
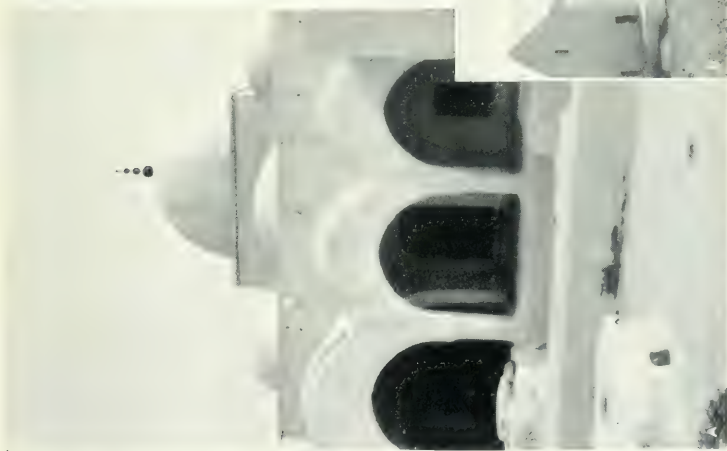
That once there grew a fruit here, overpoweringly enticing, Homer, and to a lesser degree Herodotus, make abundantly clear. What else attracted hither to this remote beach the first adventurous Jews? What else attracted me? It is true that whereas you gather from Homer that it was a fruit so potent and so subtle you took it for dessert only, Herodotus infers it was a sort of tabloid food which did away with the necessity of breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. "The Lotophagi," says he, "live entirely on the fruit of the lotus-tree." Entirely, you observe. "Mán hu?" indeed, as the Hebrews asked when they first saw manna upon the ground. "Mán hu? What is this?" I wonder that



some scholar has not attempted to prove that manna and lotus were the same vegetable.

What then was the lotus ? Had I not come to Djerba to feed on it ? No man to-day shall decide what it veritably was, saving he enter, as I did, into the dwelling-places of the Jews. Certain learned half-wits declare the lotus was no other fruit than the date (though Herodotus explicitly declares that in sweetness it resembled the date, *ergo* it was not the date). More dangerous patients prove laboriously it was the olive. Some incline to the berry of the *rhus oxyacanthoides*—a theory which bears its condemnation in the very sound of it ; a few to the inspired conviction that it was a clover whereof the sailors grazed like the beasts of the field. And there are some, finally, speaking more wisdom than they know, who declare it to be the fruit of the wild jujube—*zizyphus lotus*.

I say they speak more wisdom than they know, for if they were to pluck the fruit of that tree and devour it straightway, they would abandon their theory. The raw lotus, as Rawlinson correctly says, looks and tastes like a bad crab-apple. I refuse to believe that the sailors of Odysseus forgot the name of their native land in the stupefaction caused by an over-dose of crab-apples ; or that acute stomachic pains were the cause of their languor. The fact is that, precisely as Herodotus remarks with a somewhat audible sniff, “ the Lotophagi even succeed in obtaining from it a sort of wine.” Exactly. It was the wine distilled from the lotus which was the secret of it all, the most potent wine I have ever tasted. And it is not the few French



(A) DJERBA : "DOMES CURVED AND TOPPLING LIKE A WAVE ARRESTED," (B) THE CARETAKER AT  
EL GHIRBA, THE MARVEL, (C) "ON A JOURNEY TO A CERTAIN OASIS . . ."

(D) DJERBA : THOSE CURIOUS GABLED WORKSHOPS



colonials of Djerba who distil it, or drink it. They drink the imported poisons from the Tunisian vineyards, and should a real French wine wander into their exile, their bosoms shake with sobs. It is not the Muslims of Djerba who are responsible for it, the Supreme Teetotaller having turned their talents in other directions.

It is the Jews of Djerba who distil the lotus. They are the Lotophagi, by which you must translate lotus-drinkers. Whether it was the Jews in the Jewish villages of Hara-Kebîra and Hara-Serîra who seduced the sailors of Odysseus from Ithaca as they themselves are seduced from Zion, I will not decide. So early as that I do not believe that the peoples of Israel in the north and Judah in the south had sunk their differences. It may be that the people of Hara-Kebîra were a colony of Israelites and the people of Hara-Serîra a colony of Judeans and that they first joined forces to entertain the Greek strangers from the Ionian islands. All that seems to be rather hazardous theorising. I merely wish to make it quite clear that if you would now desire to partake of the lotus, even where those old sailors partook of it, it is from the hands of a Jew you must receive it in the far island of Djerba, hemmed in by yellow sands.

Not even a Jewish stranger will find room in either of the Haras, or ghettos, of Djerba. He must pitch his tent in the Gentile village of Houmt-Souk, where there are one or two primitive hotels. This is the metropolis of the island, though only in so much as the population, which is pretty evenly distributed

among the orchards and the olive groves, coagulates here rather more thickly than elsewhere. The villages are, in fact, hardly more than local markets, of which Houmt-Souk is the chief. Here gather the bronzed Maltese with the sponges wrested from the fretted bases of the island, and the poorer Muslims lay out their vegetables and fruit. The richer Muslims and the Jews sit cross-legged in the bazaars among the rugs and carpets woven in those curious gabled workshops that are a unique feature in the architecture of the island, breaking so unexpectedly into the familiar lines of soaring minaret and curving dome. The Jewish goldsmiths also forgather here with the gilt trinkets they have hammered and fretted and bejewelled, squatting in their vaulted rooms in the Haras several miles away ; or they fasten on some dusky Libyan leg, precisely as Herodotus records, "a ring made of bronze." How many shadowy centuries back extends the Jewish tradition of jewelry in Djerba? Whence derived? From those primal goldsmiths who bedecked the heart of a priest with twelve jewels in rows? For though most of the conventions they work in are Arabic or Byzantine in nature, others are earlier than the Hellenic from which the Byzantine are derived ; sacerdotal they seem, as if the artificers had an uneasy memory of that thaumaturgic jewelry which winked with its own fires in the precincts of the Lord, the Urim and Thummim. . . .

But let it not be understood that though they have distilled the lotus and are masters of its secrets, the Jews of Djerba have had their business instinct spirited



away from them by that enchantment. I heard a story from a young Muslim of a felucca beating its way up the fringes of Africa with a cargo of pots and oranges. The boat carried three passengers, a Negro, a Muslim, and a Jew from Djerba. They had not proceeded far on the journey when a sea-serpent was descried opening and shutting its jaws ravenously. Regretfully but swiftly the captain threw his cargo of pots and oranges overboard, hoping to appease the monster's hunger. The monster duly devoured the pots and oranges, but made it abundantly clear that he was still hungry, whereon the captain threw the benches overboard. Having swallowed these, the serpent made signs that he was rather hungrier than when he started. The captain had no alternative but to throw over successively the Negro, the Muslim, and the Jew from Djerba. The serpent was now convinced that he had never met a more engaging captain in his life. He looked like swallowing the whole ship when, fortunately, a man-of-war appeared and blew the monster's head off. There was a general rush to see what the interior of the creature looked like. It did not disappoint them. The pots and oranges were all neatly arranged on the benches and the Jew from Djerba was busy selling them to the Negro and the Muslim.

It was in a beautifully disposed company we set forth southward from Houmt-Souk to explore the ghettos of Hara-Kebîra and Hara-Serîra. We were a Protestant, a Muslim, a Greek Churchman, a French Catholic, and a Jew. I could not help pointing out to

my friends that I felt like a hen shepherding the chickens she has hatched into the hen-coop they have deserted. They could not repudiate the analogy. "But you seem to forget," said the French Catholic, a somewhat cynical young gentleman, "the part the Divine Chanticleer played in the fecundation of your eggs." When we approached the entrance into the first ghetto, the Muslim, being a native of the island, said a little uncomfortably he would wait for us outside the village. I am certain his motive was not a sense of social superiority. The official sheikhs of the island are Muslims, it is true. But the *élite* are a small handful of Jews. Indeed a tiny house was pointed out to me in the Hara owned by a certain Jew who was a preponderating influence not only in the politics of Djerba but of the whole colony. His property in the Faubourg St Honoré was considerably more extensive, but he preferred squatting on a Djerba rug with a decoction of lotus beside him to sitting stiffly in his gilt Louis Quinze salon amid the plop of Veuve Cliquot corks.

My friend's motive was not a sense of social superiority, I repeat, even though every Jew he would meet in the village wore a garment of shame to distinguish him from all Muslims. But it was a garment of shame from which the shamefulness had departed. The days were gone when the wearing of that white smock was attended by the easy danger of cuffs and spittings in the face. But even when the danger was at its greatest, in the dark days before the Powers extracted their *Pacte Fondamental* from Mohammed Bey, I doubt if the most ferocious Muslim did not pause and draw



back at the threshold of the ghetto, with whatever jeers and flinging about him of his camel-hair rope he had reached thither. It will not be imagined, of course, that the Muslim, as such, was forbidden entrance into the ghetto. But however he may dawdle with his camels and asses on the high road on either side, he does not linger in the ghetto itself. A certain awe is upon him, he walks swiftly through urging his beasts and looking neither to the right hand nor to the left.

No, not for any social reason did my friend, the Muslim, forbear from entering the ghetto. And I can assure you it was not for any dread of physical violence. I say this not only because the Jews and Muslims of Djerba have of late lived on terms of scandalous amity, but because this particular Muslim was an Aïssaouïa, and therefore very readily subjected himself to more deadly violence than any Jew, or indeed any Christian, could possibly have conceived. In certain conditions of religious ecstasy he would transfix his whole body with swords till he looked like a bull in the arena after the banderilleros have finished with him. Moreover, and I have seen him do it, he could devour live scorpions with the utmost relish in attestation of the glory of Allah and the superiority of Mohammed over his predecessors, Moses and Jesus.

It was not fear, therefore, that kept my accomplished friend beyond the circuit of the ghetto. It was taboo. It was the piece of string suspended between the two twigs stuck into the opposite corners of the ghetto street. His friends, the Jews, respected his own

taboo. He respected theirs. But as foreigners to the island, the Catholic, the Greek Churchman, and the Protestant permitted themselves to proceed with me into the places of my kinsmen.

The houses of the Jews in Djerba are indistinguishable from the houses of the Muslim. A blind wall faces upon an unpaved narrow lane, and the dark door is opened not a second longer than will allow you to enter. You find yourself in a sunny court crowded with multitudes of children. There are few trees and no flowers in the court, for there is no living water in Djerba. The water supply of the island consists exclusively of wells and rain-cisterns, which helps to explain why the Djerba Jewesses are much slimmer than their sisters in Tunis. The Djerbans, like Rebecca, must make their way to the well, balancing the clay jar on their erect heads. The Tunisians have water laid on, which absolves them from their sole opportunity of exercise. Not that their menfolk mind. The Jewess of Tunis is valued by weight. In Djerba she is more frequently valued by her headdress of gold coins, and still more frequently by charms more impalpable. But I must quell my impatience to arrive at that theme. I must endeavour first to compose her setting.

A number of small archways on three sides give upon this central court, and each is the entrance to the single vaulted chamber which is the whole territory of a single family. The walls above the archways of this central court are sometimes inlaid with rows of coloured tiles, but only among the more elaborate jewellers and the master carpet-weavers. The building

consists of one story only. Usually the patriarch of the family with his spouse occupies the chamber nearest to the door, so that the constitution of a house is only a single stage removed from a tribal encampment, the tents merely being stiffened into dried brick and white-washed. The cooking has no ampler machinery than a few three-pronged clay shards not many inches high, heaped up with charcoal. There are no chimneys in the rooms, of course, and the open court is the sole kitchen. Water is stored in the shadow in great amphoræ, of precisely the shape that the Romans introduced into the island.

As you enter, the first thing you set eyes on is the patriarch of the household seated upon the capital of some pillar which once held up a Roman temple; he turns over upon his knee the pages of a holy book expounding an earlier creed, a creed worshipped in a temple earlier than the Roman temple, in a temple overthrown by the Roman worshippers. Little does that old man know what a symbol he is of one of the great revenges of history. He is more potent than Samson with the ruins of Dagon about him. For Samson was slain with Dagon, but this old Jew of Djerba has his foot on the neck of Jupiter, and his quiet murmur is in truth a hosanna of victory.

A brightly-striped hanging suspends in each archway. You push this aside to enter a small, shadowy vestibule, and turning right or left you enter the chamber proper, one-half of which is occupied by a low and deep recess. In this recess the whole family sleeps upon piled rugs, and in a higher and smaller recess in

one of the side walls the rest of the family's rugs are stored against the keen winter nights. Other belongings than these they do not possess. It is as if they had inherited from some remote exodus the knowledge that he travels swiftest who carries least; as if their lotus-heavy somnolence were sometimes for a sharp moment disturbed by the fancy that the whitewashed brick of their vaults had sagged of a sudden into the brown goat-hair sacking of a nomad tent; as if the wandering from Palestine into Arabia, from Arabia across the torpid sea to Abyssinia, from Abyssinia to this quiet fringe of Libya, must on the morrow be resumed; and the way to the Pillars of Hercules is perilous and the breath of the enemy is hot upon the neck.

We had not left taboo behind us at the insubstantial portals of the ghetto. It was true that my Catholic friend, with his grace and good spirits, was *persona grata* among these Jews of Djerba; moreover, they spoke little French or none, and he a certain amount of their Judeo-Arabic (so that I, incidentally, had an easy channel of communication with them). And yet the moment we swung aside the curtain that shielded from the sun the household of his friend, Sidi Pinhas Sabban, a sense of taboo once more asserted itself. It was an arcane sensation, difficult to describe, and I can vouch that my own conscious mind had no part in it. I can only speak with certainty of its effect, and its effect was to exclude my three Christian friends from that dark, vaulted room as certainly in the spirit as the Muslim was excluded some hundreds of yards away in



the flesh. It was not that my friends, and least of all the Frenchman, became in the slightest degree embarrassed or ill at ease. It was merely that they knew that they were outside, excluded, and we, Sidi Pinhas Sabban and I, were within, held together in a mystery till the end of time.

When I come to reflect upon that uncanny moment it strikes me as a more beautiful corroboration of his most desperate allegations than any professional anti-Semite ever dared to hope for. That little goldsmith who twists gold thread in the island of the Lotus-Eaters off the coast of Libya, and I, the chance wanderer from misty England—we were, indeed, the Elders of Zion. We were the agents of a wide-world conspiracy. And what made us more dangerous was that our complicity was a thing so subtle; secret, spiritual, spontaneous. We had not sent letters to each other in invisible ink detailing the latest stages in our plans for the assassination of all the Gentile financiers in Lombard Street and Wall Street. We had made no swarthy arrangements for the exchange of Muslim and Christian children between our countries to be ritually murdered on the coming Passover. And yet, not having conveyed a single syllable to each other by any medium, or having been in the faintest degree aware of each other's existence until the swinging aside of that curtain, having as common, superficial currency not more than five words of French on his side and five of Arabic on mine, we could have organised in the knowledge of our oneness vaster projects than those. Drugged as he was by his African lotus, drugged as I was by my Hellenic

asphodel, we had a potency which has already performed great things and will perform them again. It had made their creeds for our Catholic and Greek Orthodox and Protestant friends in the room with us and for the Muslim beyond the gate. It had made their creeds. It may unmake them. Who knows to what ultimate creed it might then address itself, even until the fires of the sun wane and the glaciers thrust their snouts from the saddles of all the hills into the grey nipped lands ?

And, I repeat, all this was uncanny. For how little had I in common with this brown-eyed besmocked little Jew from Djerba, and how much with my three Christian friends ! For the Protestant was an Englishman and we had all English literature in common from *Beowulf* to James Joyce ; and the Greek and I had in common the memory of the cloven cliffs above Delphi and the blue rapier of the Gulf of Corinth beyond the olive groves. And if the Frenchman and I had no more in common than the memory of a bottle of Château Lafitte, what a bond was there !

Yet soon, soon, verily, in the bond of the wine distilled from lotus were the two Jews to pledge their race and in the sweetened lotus preserved whole in spirit to record the mystic benefaction of manna. Yet I confess myself baffled by the nature of the taboo which imposed itself in Pinhas's small room. First he brought forth two three-legged stools and sat himself down on one. He expected, I gathered shortly, that I should assume the other. But I did not do so until I had pressed the three Gentiles to occupy it singly or

divide it between them. "No, no," whispered the Catholic. "It is not right. We Christians must sit on the floor. It is expected here. Do you sit upon the stool." I did so, my head somewhat in a whirl. I had never known in general history or personal experience the Gentile so assume or so submit to disabilities with regard to the Jew. I had a feeling that we had attained antipodes, or the secret side of the moon. Yet I could not suppress a certain sense of self-satisfaction that I and my brother should be enthroned on stools and the Christians lie at our feet upon the floor. It was as if we were the twin Kings of Israel and Judah, and the outer tribes had come in to pay us dues. The badge of his shame, the white smock imposed on his fathers by the fathers of his Muslim friends, became in this curious half-light a princely robe, the garment of a high mystery. It grieved me that I was not myself thus marked out. But I, at least, I too sat upon a throne. Whatever smouldering inferiority complexes my Jewish existence in a Gentile world had engendered in me were at that moment extinguished. "Make yourselves quite at home," I said, with gracious condescension.

Sidi Pinhas was, it was evident, happy to be entertaining us. His wife, he said, would shortly reappear from the well where the camel all day, at the end of a tether, made his sardonic rounds. She had gone with their first baby to draw water. In the meanwhile he drew forth a cruse of wine. He carefully poured away the layer of olive oil with which it was protected from the air, even as the wine of the Romans two thousand years ago was protected and the wine of the Italians



to this day. Then he passed a glass over to me and I made politely to pass it farther to my friend, the Frenchman. Once more I heard the thud of the wings of taboo in the air.

“Cashair!” he exclaimed, urgently, “Cashair!” I wondered in what language he spoke. But I perceived from my host that it was, in fact, I and not the others who was expected to drink that wine. “Cashair!” my host repeated. But upon his Jewish lips, although there was no demonstrable difference in his mode of pronouncing the word, I promptly understood it. Kosher, to be sure, the wine was Kosher. I saluted him and raised the wine to my lips, such a wine as I had never before tasted. A certain acidity there was about it, but an insidiousness which had once worked legendary woe. I was drinking the wine distilled from the lotus, incredibly after two or three thousand years denied the Gentile and become the Jew’s proud privilege—Cashair, forbidden! For that was the stress placed upon the word by the Frenchman. Till that time I had only known Kosher as a dietary mode or substance which all the world might partake of and the poor Jew must. It had now become a stuff of taboo. Only the proud Jew might, and the poor Gentile must not.

Not that my friends were denied good cheer. To them Sidi Pinhas brought a flask of boukkha, the fiery distillation of peaches, which for some reason they might partake of what time the distilled lotus was denied them. To them he brought dried cakes; to me, in addition, the lotus itself preserved in spirit—*nebk*, he called it; and then for us all, out of the rug-recess,

he brought a dish of still warm cooked meats, in the three-pronged clay shard in which it had lately been prepared. It was whilst we were engaged upon these foods and these liquors to wash them down that his wife appeared, the loveliest lady, I think, I ever set eyes on.

I have seen in various lands ladies who were lovely in various modes. But the wife of Sidi Pinhas (and, to tell the truth, the greater part of these Jewesses from Djerba, though she was the loveliest) had a beauty I could not associate with any living race I had encountered. She was, of course, a long way removed from the cold creatures of the north, fair as they are. Under no grey skies were those eyes enkindled. But she was beautiful, not in the way that, for instance, Spanish women are beautiful, or Italian women, or the Turkish women whom Angora has ordered to walk forth unveiled. She recalled to me for a moment the Bedouin women of the mainland, but I was quick to see that that was because, like them, she wore great bangles over her elbows and above her brown feet, and the folds of her gown were held together by a large chased clasp. But she had not their nimbleness, their inquisitive chin, their ridged nose, their restless eyes. She wore a headdress of gold coins and seemed less like a living woman of the people, despite the child at her breast, than the queen of some race that has ceased to exist.

Or had I not seen somewhere certain women not unlike her, in their gravity, in their calm assurance? Where had I seen them then, if at all? Then of a sudden I remembered. In the uplands of Thessaly, in the smaller

Aegean islands, where the Greek type still lingers. It was they who seemed her kinswomen, not the urgent and ardent Jewish women out of eastern Europe, not the tempered Jewish women of western Europe and America. She seems, and all the Jewesses of Djerba seemed, not Jewish, not Semitic, but Greek. She seemed even earlier than Greek, as if she went back to the Greek beginnings in Crete and Mycenæ. There I had seen her precise image, I now at length realised, that same full chin, those long, grave eyes, that unilinear brow and nose. I had seen her in the pattern of a Cretan vase treading an airy dance, or bearing an urn upon her head or distilling potions out of secret herbs. More recently, she had been distilling out of lotus the wine I held to my lips now.

What secret does that Jewess of Djerba hint at, who seemed so much more Greek than Jewish? What irrecoverable knowledge must first be recovered before it shall be divined? For seeing that it cannot be disputed that she stands at the fountain-head of the Jewish race, that she presents its archetype unperturbed by the strains of Khazar or Iberian or Teuton, shall we dare to believe that the Jews were primordially creatures of the Mediterranean seacoast and island rather than sullen wanderers from the gaunt Arabian peninsula? The aspect of these or those do we perpetuate, these swift Greek creatures of sea and wind whom no creek in the ultimate antique seas did not harbour, or those swarthy submitters, the Arab Semites, those paragons of the principles of sterility?

Is it postërous that the Jewess from Djerba should

lead us so far away from all our ancient anchorages? Go with me so far as this, then. Admit the Jewess of Djerba and her kinsfolk in those proud ghettoes to be not mere dull, workaday Jews. Admit that when Odysseus brought back to their ships those of his sailors who had fed upon lotus, he could not find certain of them. For these had found sanctuary in the ghettoes and had therein taken to themselves Jewish maidens for wives; they it was who produced the race of the modern Lotophagi, whom you may visit for yourselves, those Hellenic Hebrews who read the Torah of Moses and feed upon the Lotus of Homer.

## CHAPTER II

### SYNAGOGUE AND MOSQUE

THE shallow seas are the most difficult to negotiate, both in fact and philosophy; and the shallow seas which encompass Djerba, the island of the Hebraic Lotus-Eaters, have kept it so inviolate, even though Africa is full in sight, as many an island set in the seas which never plummet sounded. A slight disturbance in the Djerba waters is enough to keep a boat floundering off-shore for hours. It is true that the strait between Houmt Adjim in the island and Marsa on the mainland is almost landlocked, and a motor-boat now plies between those two points. But many more years will elapse before petrol will have torn away from Djerba her veils of Mosaic and Homeric secrecy any more efficiently than those camel-caravans which for a thousand years have at low tide crossed the farther strait of El-Kantara on the ruins of a Roman dam.

Hence both Judaism and Islam, synagogue and mosque, on the island of Djerba have for centuries been preserved in a sort of scientific isolation—not like the fly in amber, petrified, so that your study has hardly more than a palæontological interest; but developing, so far as under such conditions they had it in their power to develop. Or if they did not develop, they were at least alive, and alive under such



conditions, hemmed in by such narrow confines that their mere contiguous living could not but have affected their respective characteristics. To study synagogue and mosque in Djerba is to study in an exquisite microcosm the contacts and reactions of the two faiths over the wider stage of Tunisia, and, indeed, upon that grandiose arena of North Africa, which is half the world. (For the two shores of the Mediterranean constitute the world. All other lands are but their suburbs and provinces.) Synagogue and mosque have been preserved, I say, in a scientific isolation, precisely such as a chemist seeks to integrate in his test-tubes and retorts. The conditions of the experiment have sometimes been violently modified by extraneous interruption. For (speaking only, of course, of post-Islamic history) not only have rival Arab dynasties contended murderously for the island, but the dwellers upon the northern shores, Sicilians, Italians, Spaniards, have thrown more than one desperate gage for the possession of those cool groves and crowded marts. And there were less smoky interruptions; for Djerba was for long the *depôt* of the far-wandering African caravans. The Muslim would issue from his mosque, the Jew from his synagogue, to hold traffic with cannibals from Liberia, Kanori fetish-worshippers, scimitared Touaregs, black Songhoi from Timbaktu, deploying in the shady bazaars their wealth of tusks and gold dust, ostrich feathers and leopard skins.

But sooner or later the Sicilian or the Spaniard *roumi* was to be seen in the island no more, leaving only



his skull, perhaps, to record his coming. Sooner or later the rumour of the merchants from Mogador or the Soudan was quiet in the bazaars. The Jew repaired into his synagogue again, the Muslim into his mosque;

Upon the conclusion each of his Sabbath, the Jew retired to his vaulted workshop to tease out the gold filigree, the Muslim to his loom to weave his carpet or saddle-rug. Once more these kinsmen of Abraham were left alone in their seclusion to emphasise their likenesses or dig deeper the trenches of essential difference. The great inquisitive Chemist was at work again in His laboratory.

Only the religions of the Jews and Arabs are, in theory, one-dimensional. The Jews have many prophets and none supreme, the Muslims many and one supreme, Mohammed being his name, the younger brother of Moses and Jesus, who inherited all their sanctity and transcended it. These religions only seek in the point called God their complete validity, a point which contains the whole Universe, whence all height, width, depth, all illusion, are annulled. No images are to be set up, nor the likeness of images, whether human or animal. No synagogue or mosque is large enough to contain the minutest fraction of Him or so small that it cannot contain Him wholly. In Djerba the opportunity is presented to you to study mosque and synagogue in a place where these kindred altars have so long co-existed, in a curious sterilising remoteness paralleled, perhaps, nowhere else on earth.

Shall you not, therefore, find such likeness between them in Djerba that sometimes you might almost



RAMPARTS OF ZION  
(From a painting by Rabin)



wonder whether it is into mosque or synagogue you have penetrated? And shall this likeness prove that, had it not been for the cataclysms of history, the synagogue might have been absorbed into the mosque at length, or, conversely, that the mosque might have relapsed into the synagogue whence it arose?

Believe me, that though the synagogue at Djerba had discarded the language of the Torah for the language of the Koran, or that the mosque had thrown Mohammed aside for Moses, never till the ending of the world might the two altars become one altar, even though the flame of the Shekinah, wandered from Jerusalem, burns smokily in the thousand altar-lamps that enkindle the Black Stone of Mecca.

Some distance away from Hara-Serîra, the greater of the two villages which constitute the ghettos of Djerba, stands a synagogue called the "Ghriba," which means, the Marvel. It is from a complex of reasons that the place is held to be marvellous, of which the least, I should think, is the marvel of the actual building. It imposes a blank wall upon the street, and from no vantage is the exterior as lovely as the greater number of the mosques and zaïouas which punctuate the island beyond every clump of palms or grove of olives. The treasure of the synagogue, on the other hand, its unique collection of sacred furniture, is indeed extraordinary. I should doubt if any New York synagogue, tenanted as populously by millionaires as this by paupers, can have achieved such a wealth of ancient scrolls of the law, of incense-shakers, pointers

in gold and silver, beakers, curtains, scroll-coverings, candlesticks. Now the Ghriba is not merely a synagogue, it is a place of pilgrimage, which fact I shall have occasion to amplify. And a place of pilgrimage not only for the Jews of Tunisia and Tripolitania, but even for the Catholics and the Muslims of these countries. It is only to be expected that the treasure of the synagogue is packed away into their fretted shrines of cedarwood almost before the stranger has time to look upon them, much less to handle them; among such a motley crowd of pilgrims it is not surprising that some are less to be trusted than others. But when the cedarwood cupboards are drawn to over the scrolls of the Law, and the other holy lumber packed away, you do not feel it surprising that a Muslim might feel at home in this temple of the Jews. He would have been reassured, or even deluded, at the very portals of the synagogue by the presentation of those talismans against evil which are prevalent throughout African Islam (derived as they are from the traditions of Jewish decoration), tattooed on the forearms of princes and plastered on the hovels of slaves. You will see the painted effigy of the hand of Fatima, the like of which in silver filigree is to be bought in any Muslim bazaar from Tangier to the sources of the Nile. Close alongside is the painted eye, to avert its own evil kinsman. Precisely this same image is to be seen on the prows of Sicilian boats, imprinted there by the Saracens who once usurped their decks. When you enter the synagogue, you will observe a number of ostrich eggs slung among the lamps below the ceiling, which objects





ARAB CHILDREN





you will have noted before now in a hundred mosques. (You have begun to divine already how fetishistic, how Islamic, Judea seems to be in Djerba.) We have deserted, alas, the integrity of our single dimension. We have come into contact with images, or at least the extracted and separate organs of images, in two dimensions. We have deserted the permitted innocence of abstract decoration, which is called arabesque, and I do not see that a hand and an eye, removed from purely non-significant pattern and imposed for their thaumaturgic value, are less noxious than a whole saint or a whole devil. For witchcraft is by nature homœopathic, so that the hand of Fatima, the bringer of good luck, recovered from Islam with the Islamic character stamped upon it, is the limb of a benevolent *djinn*, and the evil eye which averts the evil eye once stared from the stony sockets of Orotál or Alilât, or who knows what swarthy pre-Mohammedan idol of the harsh Arabian sanctuaries. But the depravity is by one dimension more serious. By what warrant does the carnal egg attract the Jew's eye from his Holy of Holies or the Muslim from the *mihrab*, the niche in the wall facing nearest to the Black Stone in Mecca? Here lies danger. It is a question of pure sophistry whether the egg is an object less idolatrous than the fowl implicit in it. What winged deity has sponsored it, Egyptian ibis or Assyrian cherub?

These things, then, the Muslim beholds at the portals of this mosquish synagogue in Djerba. The blue tiles might be the facing of a dozen mosques he knows. The intricately fretted cedarwood doors might have been

imported to the Ghriba from some loft of surplus fittings in the Great Mosque at Kairouan. Now, finally, let the *chazan* mount the Hebraic rostrum and drone his way through the Torah. The Muslim pilgrim lying stretched along the matted shelves in the wall of the synagogue, his burnous drawn over his ears, might well deem this is his own lector reciting *sura* upon *sura* from his own Koran. "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful," he murmurs, and, being exhausted by the great distance he has travelled on this final stage of his journey, he tucks his knees under his chin and goes to sleep.

It is when you are informed that not only the Muslims but the Catholics of these countries come on pilgrimage to this Hebrew synagogue, that you are veritably astounded. For whereas, as I have suggested, the Muslim might fall asleep in the Ghriba, because he found the atmosphere so homely, there is no chance in the world of a Catholic feeling himself at home for a single moment. There is in fact always, even at their most unperverted, more affinity between the synagogue and the mosque than between the church and either. For if Islam is in certain respects a debased Pharisaism—Pharisaism being a debased Judaism—the lines of contact between Islam and Christianity are slight and rare. The fact is that Mohammed learned a great deal from the powerful and erudite Jews of Arabia who were his contemporaries, whilst from the few Christians he met, themselves both in a moral and doctrinal sense heretics, he learned little more than apocryphal marvel and nightmarish dogma. He deemed, for instance,

that Mary, the mother of Christ, was none other than Miriam, the sister of Aaron, and that in addition to these human relationships, she was the Third Person in the Trinity. He incorporated into Islam none of the specific doctrines of Christianity, whereas he was so generous to Judaism that he declared even its patriarchal founder to have been instinctively a Muslim, even though so many ages were yet to elapse before he himself was to appear to transmit the ultimate dispensation. "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian," he wrote, "but he was sound in the faith, a Muslim." Whereupon, in company with Ishmael, he set up the Ka'ba, the Meccan sanctuary which houses the Black Stone, as an altar to the One God. What wonder, therefore, that the Muslim wanderer is not perturbed in the Jewish house of Abraham, even though by some error of his own previous clemency his doctrines be expounded not in Arabic but Hebrew?

Yet how should the Catholic find his way hither? Here shall no Latin of the Vulgate be sonorously enunciated, nor the kindly third dimension be permitted, save furtively. I put this question to my companion, himself a Catholic, a Frenchman. He was a young man salty with the Gallic cynicism, and in reply to my question his face assumed that portentous gravity which indicates to the experienced that a Frenchman is going to be quite devastatingly frivolous.

"El Ghriba, as you know," he said, "means the Marvel. There was once a Jewish girl in Hara-Serîra who was chaste. She was deemed such a portent that they erected this monument to her. You see?"

I did not see. Nor did I enter, as he hoped, into an injured espousal of the morals of my kinswomen. I turned my attention towards the grand, bearded creature who had displayed to us with trembling fingers the treasure of his synagogue. He was, I think, no more than the *shammos*, the beadle ; but the Jews in the Hara had spoken of him with reverence, and he was evidently a man of learning. The Rabbi himself was no more to be seen than that crucial marvel of the synagogue whose existence I was shortly to ascertain. The *shammos* had fulfilled that injunction of the Talmud which bids a man acquire and practise some profession however deeply he studies the Torah. We interrupted him in the middle of whitewashing a vaulted chamber on the remoter edge of the village. He accompanied us to the Ghriba with white splashes on his beard, turban, and smock. His hands were unwilling and unsteady. He tottered. Yet there was a dignity about him such as I have seen the actors of several nations seek vainly to achieve in the portrayal of just such a Jew. He seemed no unworthy guardian of the true Ghriba, which was nothing less than one of the tablets of the Mosaic Law discovered in this place a thousand years ago. So I learned from him as, slowly, I won his confidence. That was the Marvel of Djerba, the loadstone of the Jewish pilgrims and the Muslim and the Christian. For that reason, hard by the synagogue, on the farther side of the road, was the hostelry established, with the numbered rooms and the bakery and the kitchen and the quiet court for contemplation. To do obeisance to the Tablet of Moses, the Black Stone of Djerba, the



document more sacred than any letter of Mary or painting of St Luke—El Ghriba, the Marvel.

I did not have the good fortune to set eyes on either the Rabbi of Djerba or the Tablet of Moses entrusted to his keeping. An air of mystery surrounded the Rabbi, for one of his devotees, an honest man, told me he was sick ; a second, no less honest, said he was engaged upon a sacred and solitary recital from the Babylonian Gemarra which he suspended neither for food nor sleep during the space of seven days and seven nights ; a third, whose veracity I could not dream of impugning, stated he was on a journey to a certain small oasis in the Matmata country, where report told of a scroll of the Law not less ancient than any in the Ghriba, and worthy of no house less honourable. But he imparted the information with such an air of mystery that I could not help receiving the impression that he believed there was something supernatural about the Rabbi's mode of transit. Had the Rabbi invoked the Lord of Hosts even with the words of Sidi-Abd-El Aziz Madj, Marabout of the Ksar, who, desiring to journey to Mecca, invoked the name of Allah, and thereupon saw flying towards him out of the heavens the winged horse named Ifrit ? Or with the words of the Marabout Sidi Mohammed Ben Aouda, the journeyer upon the back of holy lions ? Or the Marabout of the Flying Carpet ? Or of the Cloud, or of the Sacred Stool ?

I could elicit no information upon the point. But this at least I could deduce, that not to no purpose had Jew and Muslim been so segregated in their crystal remoteness, featly had the Chemist worked in His exalted



laboratory. The Jewish Rabbi had taken on some of the vulgar awe of the Muslim Marabout, intimate of Mohammed and worker of gross marvels. And then the realisation came upon me—the meaning of these mysteries and pilgrimages, of a black stone worshipped and credulous people coming from far lands. Not only had the Rabbi taken on the aspect of a Marabout, but the synagogue had taken on the aspect of a mosque. Djerba was precisely a little Mecca. And though (this seemed certain) the pilgrim might not kiss the Tablet of Moses in Djerba and rub his forehead and beard upon it in an ecstasy, as he kisses the Black Stone of the Ka'ba in Mecca, some day the Tablet would be made manifest again, the Tablet delivered upon Sinai out of the cracking heavens. This was their faith, Jew and Muslim and Christian. Who would repudiate the chance of so secure a commendation to the bosom of God?

A comparison between the creeds of the three religions whose professors forgather at the portals of the Ghriba is instructive. The Christian creed is so complex that it takes some minutes to recite it, and so subtle that its countless doctors have expounded it for two thousand years with no further result than to split the body of its adherents into ten secondary religions and a thousand sub-heresies. The creed, or *kalimah*, of the Muslims, is simpler, containing not more than two clauses: "There is no God but Allah, Mohammed is the apostle of God." The simplest of all is the Jewish creed: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." It is true that these words

retain the character of a jealous tribal proclamation. It is Israel that is requested to hear, not all nations with all that therein dwell. Nor has the jealously proprietary accent departed even at this day from the possessive pronoun . . . "the Lord *our* God." But the emphasis lies not in the possession, it lies in the unity, whereas in the *kalimah* the emphasis is equal in both clauses, the unity of God and the apostleship of Mohammed. But the simulation of Mecca in Djerba forces upon the traveller a conviction that has grown more irresistible elsewhere in the Muslim world. Though the *kalimah* possesses two clauses, there has been a third clause as urgent in the Muslim's belief since the days of the Prophet himself, or, it might be said, during all the dark ages of Arabia before the Prophet's advent. I mean the duty of the pilgrimage to the Black Stone in Mecca.

It is true that, technically, this duty is but one of the five duties imposed on the complete Muslim, as expounded in the traditions of Mohammed. His first duty is the proclamation of the *kalimah*; his second, the offering of prayer; his third, the payment of alms; his fourth, the fasting upon Rámadán; his fifth, the pilgrimage. It is true also, that he is only requested to perform the pilgrimage, "if he is able," the conditions of disability being clearly defined. But the fact remains that the urgency of the pilgrimage has become during the course of Muslim history the central fact in the Muslim mind. He will pay out his alms duly, in Tunis or Aden. He will keep the fast sternly, in Bombay or Tangier. He will utter his prayers rigidly, till his

brain is numb to their meaning. But the Black Stone is a fever in his blood till he has allayed the fever by pressing his mouth there. The Black Stone is Allah and Mohammed.

So that, in essence, Islam is a local religion now, no less than the less successful local religions that it supplanted or incorporated. From time immemorial the principal sanctuary of these lands has been the Ka'ba of Mecca, and the Black Stone, set in its southeastern corner, is but one of the many fetishes which were adored here before Mohammed and before Christ. The others Mohammed threw over, but by leaving this single one he consolidated them all. He made a specific and tangible altar, consecrating idolatry.

The less enlightened among the Christians may have their minor altars. But where must they turn for the prime altar of their belief? The Protestant is not preoccupied with pilgrimage; but how shall the Catholic prefer Rome to Jerusalem or Jerusalem to Nazareth? What, then, of the Jew? What of the pilgrimage to Zion? What of the youths in their pride and the old men in their decrepitude who have fared over lands and seas to set their vigorous or senile mouths upon the Wall of Weeping?

No, it is only a literary abuse of words to speak of a "pilgrimage" to those sad stones. A pilgrimage can be performed only to an altar alleged triumphant, not to an altar ruined and spat upon. The journey of the Jews is no act of obligation like the Muslim *hajj*; it is no more than an act of sentiment or, if you will, of heartbreak.

The *hadj* is the great pilgrimage of the Muslims to Mecca. A lesser pilgrimage to Mecca may be performed called the *umra*. And if you live in countries adjacent to the Gulf of Gabes, a pilgrimage smaller still might be performed—not merely small, alas, but heretical. But it will do. Make your way to the Ghriba, the mosque of the Jews in Hara-Serîra, which is in Djerba. Allah be exalted ! Good may come of it !

The traveller is not likely to be struck elsewhere in North Africa by a synagogue so infiltrated with Mohammed as the Ghriba of Djerba ; and should he visit there at the time of Tabernacles, on the day of the rejoicing for the Torah, he will almost wonder whether it be Torah or Koran about which the besmocked men and lads dance seven times. For precisely thus do the children of Mohammed, having achieved the long pilgrimage to Mecca, perform the *tawaf*, which is the sevenfold dancing about the Ka'ba, three times swiftly, four times slowly. But the Ghriba will do no more than intensify the impression he has acquired elsewhere in his North African wanderings, of Mohammed imposing himself on Moses, and even sometimes of Moses on Mohammed. So, for instance, the good Marabout Sidi Mahrez of Tunis, he who obtained permission for the Jews outside the wall to enter into its security, has been venerated for centuries more than any Rabbi, and the lamp that burns on his tomb everlastingly was first placed there by the Jews, and is now brightly maintained there by Jews night to night and year to year. So, conversely, the Rabbi Hamma is the eponymous saint of the Muslim village, Hammamet, and to this day

the Muslims in that place make of the sacred Friday their day of domestic preparations, and of the Jewish Saturday their Sabbath. It would be easy to multiply instances of this interpenetration: to tell of Jews and Muslims victims of the same superstitions, executors of the same motives in the arts of decoration, reciters of the same prayers. Moreover, a curious conviction begins to take hold of you, as you venture into jealous Muslim villages thrust into the fierce heart of mountains or into poor, uncertain oases remote from the tracks of the caravans. It is the same conviction that seizes you sometimes in the gathering places of the Gentile, from the humourless frigidity of the Church of Christ Scientist in Sloane Street, London, to a *Gesellschaft* of spectacled Protestant students in Leipzig or a gang of *aficionados* celebrating a noble *corrida* in Seville. *Here are Jews.*

So that suddenly you ask yourself, here in this synagogue of Djerba which seems a mosque *manqué*, a parish-pump Mecca, why has it survived at all? And you perceive in that moment that precisely because it has gone so far it has not moved at all, precisely because of the affinities it has displayed, the Ghriba is a monument of antipathy, a fortress of the stubbornness of Jewry. For it is an attestation of the most singular paradox in history, that the more pages the Gentile may tear out of the Torah, the thicker the volume is, the more Jews that massacre, conversion, assimilation or doleful snobbery expunge from the race, the more multitudinous the race is. Or, reverting to that strange small temple, the more mosquish the



synagogue of Djerba may be, built by men's hands, the more inexpugnable the synagogue of Zion is, built by no hands at all.

Why survived at all, I ask, that synagogue which seems a mosque *manqué*? That particular force has not been lacking from the history of Djerba (and from the history of Jewry encompassed by Islam, of which Djerba is a refined epitome), that force which has preserved the synagogue, even where its substance was burned to cinders, in Spain, Ukraine, Poland; the force which has most consolidated Jewry throughout history—persecution, massacre. But the danger of disintegration was fiercer in Islam (and I have shown just how far it has been able to proceed) precisely because of the opposite force, which might no less be called an inertia—indolence, toleration, a sort of specious sympathy. If the accounts were reckoned up as between Islam and Christianity of the goodwill, or mere indifference, with respect to Jewry displayed by each, the balance would be in favour of Islam. The Muslim, it is true, has on occasion displayed an anti-Jewish ferocity which makes the fervours of the Spanish Inquisitor or the Don Cossack seem like beacons of loving-kindness. But it is a ferocity which must soon consume itself, like a fire in an oasis. It may flare furiously, but it will soon be stifled by the sands of his sloth and fatalism, which are the essential landscape of his spirit.

The Ghriba is, despite everything, a synagogue and not a mosque, or, to speak more spaciouly, Judaism survives in Islam, because the force that has kept it

inviolable is greater than either of these centrifugal or centripetal influences. The gulf that separates the Jew from the Muslim is not less desperate than the gulf cloven between the Jew and the Christian, although the gulf is in places banked up with sand. There is no solidity in those banks. They are quagmires.

To define the gulf? The names of the creeds define it for all time—Israel, Islam. Israel is a state of war, Islam a state of submission. Israel has a sword in its hand, Islam a sword upon its neck. Israel is the cry of defiance against God's own angel at Peniel, Islam is the whimper of subjection under the blank heel of Kismet.

I do not mean that the steel sword has been busy in the hand of Israel, even though it has doughty records in Jewish history all the way between Canaan and Château-Thierry. But its records are not so bloody as the tale of the steel sword in the hands of the Muslim. I mean the sword of the spirit, whose dangers are more fearful than the body's maiming and whose victories bring no more palpable rewards than its defeats.

Will the brilliance of the Arab civilisation in the early middle ages be quoted to repudiate this insistence upon the sterility of Islam? How much of it was due to its infecundation by the Mediterranean spirit into which, actuated by any but humanistic intentions, Islam had urged itself? And how isolated a phenomenon it is, set between a nether and a latter darkness! Behold Tunisia, rather. I could instance no more monstrous monument to nihilism, fatalism, Kismet. Once far into the desert hinterland extended the fields of wheat, the groves of olive, where now only the jackal prowls

among the unjuicy scrub. Tunisia was then the granary of Rome. At this late day the progeny of Rome sets itself to reclaim the wilderness. But how many silted watercourses must be once more discovered, how many ramparts against the sandy winds be set up again? Consider the vast amphitheatre of El Djem, on the southward journey from Tunis to Sfax; what gardens sheltered the knights and ladies who crowded its broken tiers, what wells they drank of, what groves of fruit and acres of corn ministered to them. Now its populace is no more than snakes and lizards, and, hardly less furtive than these, a handful of Bedouins encamped in its littered pits.

But why make an effort to stem encroaching sand or husband the waters? Why? What duty more than to slit the *roumi's* throat on earth and in heaven to take count of the houris, the virgins, and the divorced women? Let the rats devour the granary of Rome. Let even the rats disperse for lack of sustenance in a waste of sand.

Consider, on the one hand, pre-French Tunisia—Islam in operation. On the other, consider Israel in operation—the brief history of post-war Palestine, whither I am bound. Here are contrasted not two talents nor two temperaments, but two eternal principles. There is no reconciling them, howsoever the great Chemist permit them to act and interact upon each other. There may be treachery, there may be the assumption of protective local miscolouring. It is true that the Shekinah that burned before the Holy of Holies gave something of its impalpable substance to be cloven into

the tongues of fire which sat upon the apostles of Christ when the Holy Ghost descended upon them ; it is true that the grosser lamps that flicker before the Ka'ba in Mecca were also there enkindled. But the lamps of Mecca shall be quenched in the prevailing light of the Shekinah ; and the seven-branched candlestick of Revelation wherein Christ stood, " His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow ; and His eyes as a flame of fire "—the seven-branched candlestick shall consume him, taking up his brightness again into the sevenfold mystery out of which it arose.

### CHAPTER III EASTWARD HO

#### I

FAREWELL now to the ultimate ghetto, farewell to Djerba, farther than Labrador is from the ramparts of Zion.

Eastward ho, for Egypt, for the Land of Bondage ! Bravo, good ship, that speedest to the farthest bournes of the world ! Bravo, good ship, annuller of differences who knowest no race, no creed, no colour, who so dost unify us, whilst deep water still floats us. Whither are you bound ? To fulfil, to frustrate, what dreams ?

They travel no distance who, like I, go no farther than Port Said. A few will disembark here and there, others will embark. But here in the ancient sea we are unified, we are a corporate personality. This ship weighed anchor, the veterans tell us, at a grey place called Tilbury. It was a mere hulk then—not the ship that will sheer to against the quayside of Yokohama, that complex elaborated entity, firmly knit together out of steel and flesh, port-holes and human eyes.

Every extreme of race and colour, character and occupation divide us and make us one. The little Goanese lad who pads about all day among the brass fittings with a rag and a tin of metal polish is an aspect



of the august captain himself, an extension of his little finger. The millionaire in his state cabin is implicated in the same doom as the lance-corporal who has learned the philosophy of signalling at Shorncliffe that he might expound it in Singapore. The atheist and the man of God lie down together with no more than a thin wall of wood between them. Both desert their austere pinnacles of denial and ecstasy to worship in an anthropomorphic pantheon whose altars are erected to first mate and second mate, engineer and donkeyman.

The ship is a richer thing than the mere sum of its constituent personalities. For each of these constituents is exalted beyond himself. And in this respect more than all others does the journeying upon ships differ from the journeying upon trains. For in the second a man is definitely shrunken into a thing less than himself. He is an objectionable creature who has occupied that corner seat to which we have manifestly a more authentic claim, even though we arrived a half-hour later than he. He is a creature who consists mainly of knees. He would contumaciously have the window shut when an enlightened man would have it open, open when none but an Eskimo would have it shut. He is a mere unit of inconvenience.

But upon a ship the opening and closing of a man's port-hole is his own concern, a thing privy to his cabin. He may stretch his legs out or not stretch them out as he desires, for he has a whole railway train to himself. He may eat oranges even. Why should he not?

But when he ascends to the deck he becomes a creature of light and air. He is almost discarnate. His brow is the tall mast and his foot is the ship's keel. Yet, within such strict limits as a sonnet permits to a thought, he retains the freedom of independent motion between bow and stern, starboard and port. He perceives that upon land his life is a slave to one tyrannous fantasy—the fantasy that it is important to get somewhere and to devise means for getting there. On board he is exonerated from this servitude. A power like a doom, irrevocable and inexorable, has taken in hand direction and destination, a power so august that at last he can breathe easily—he is a free man. Henceforth by day he walks with the sun upon his hand, and by night with the moon and stars. His familiars are seabirds and clouds. His own human companions become elemental like these.

The attempt is made to preserve certain categories. For though the little Goanese boy who polishes the brass fittings is but an aspect of the captain, for purposes of practical convenience it is never suggested that he should assume the captain's uniform, his chaste glory of braid, and take the ship in hand. Nor that the captain should take off his own shoes and put on the comical little Goanese cap and start polishing the fittings. We preserve even less violent distinctions as between passengers of the first and second saloon, and though to certain class-conscious members in each category the distinction is serious enough (for in the second class people do not dress for dinner), it is felt

on the whole that the various competitions to which the two classes devote themselves do but friendly demonstrate our spiritual solidarity.

For to-morrow there shall be a cricket match between the two classes, and there have been competitions in dancing, in crochet, in photography, and in various other occupations of such gravity. But for my own part I have not been able to resist from setting them into more subtle competition. The two classes are one, as I have said, but each is still composed of sharp personalities, not less interesting, but more interesting because of the conditions which govern them. Of which shall it be said that they are the more thrilling body of men and women—the first saloon or the second saloon?

Whom shall I oppose to the handsome and melancholy young Turk from Bagdad who confers a touch of Byronic tragedy upon the second saloon? Shall it be the French diamond merchant in the first saloon, who last week lost sixty-two thousand pounds at Monte Carlo playing the humble game of pontoon, and next day he twice recovered his losses with the profits on a handful of diamonds? And to the ancient and suave diplomat in the first saloon shall I oppose the fresh cheeked lad from Liverpool who is only twenty, who has already spent several years on the Gold Coast, whence only yellow fever dislodged him, and who now is for Penang, to dredge tin there? And whom to oppose to the mysterious Russian lady in the second? A grand duke's niece, they say. (But do they not always say?) Shall it be the lady in the first who subdues tigers

in Malaya rather with the sternness of her eye than with the shot in her barrel? (I can well believe it.)

But indeed I find it a vain occupation. They may not be opposed. They may be united only. They cohere with the ship that contains them and the men of high and low degree in whose hands their doom is—they cohere into one complex entity, firmly knit together out of steel and flesh, port-holes and human eyes. And the sea upon which their ship rides, and the moon which controls the sea's flux, and the sun from which the moon obtains all her warrant, become likewise part of them. And the cry of the seagull about the mast is their voice. And their wings are the same wings.

## II

Was it a few days ago or a few years ago that the sallow man stood on the quayside and strummed his banjo for us? And the gold-haired girl sang "Valencia" for us, and the hearty widow sold us trouser-presses because we liked her dimples, and the commercial traveller did not sell us field-glasses because we disliked his squint?

Yesterday, out of the viewless shores of Africa, a single swallow dipped and wheeled over the mast—from Djerba, my island of the Lotus-Eaters. (Why should I not believe so, if I choose? I heard the swallows calling over the place of the skulls on the yellow shore. It was just like this they called, as they dipped and wheeled over the minarets.)

There is a shed by a white farm-house over against



Windermere where each year a swallow comes. There is a gable in an old red house in Sussex, where each year a swallow builds his nest. Are you, O swallow from Djerba, one of these swallows? It is improbable, but if you are, I would not miss the opportunity of sending them greeting over in Windermere, or Sussex, as the case might be. I shall remember Windermere by Galilee and Sussex in the groves of Sharon. Let them know it, swallow.

They have posted a notice on deck to the effect that we shall pass under the lee of Crete shortly after dawn to-morrow morning. But if I am awake I shall not rise from my cabin. I shall not attempt to bring into fuller vision the woods with their dryads, the streams with their nymphs. But how is this, O too strenuous wanderer, is not Crete Hellas? And did you not swelter along the enormous ravines of Peloponnese to cast yourself down among the solitary columns of Bassae, did you not march defiant of sun and thirst all the long miles to Sparta, to Thebes? Is not Crete Hellas? Do you forswear Hellas, where in the body you have sojourned for months, and vowed to come again till you had trodden all her hills and scooped water from the troughs of all her fountains?

What? Do I indeed forswear Hellas, whither my heart went out of the dark northern city of Dooming-ton, so that the tall chimneys were cypresses; and Irwell, where the cotton-mills stand, was Ilissus, where the Greek youths bathed? No room, then, for Hellas in Zion?

But I shall not rise from my cabin, as I said, to look



upon the fabled coastland of Crete. If I am awake, I shall reach for a Book that rests on the small ledge by my bunk. There was not one word of it my father did not know. There are so few I know. The room comes back to me in which my father expounded the Book, the bare table and the wooden benches, and the small boys with their skull-caps. And the factory beyond the sooty window; the shrill hoot of the siren, the clatter of clogs on the stone pavements — and gently, inexorably, my father expounding the Book.

But what use had I for the Valley of Jezreel, I who saw white feet flashing under the olive-trees of the Vale of Tempe? And the singing of David fell upon deaf ears, ears that were not deaf to the alien, exquisite singing of Shelley. He knew, my father who is dead, so much of the Book; and his father's father before him. There was none of all their race who did not know its main contours, its intricate details, as profoundly as they knew the faces of the women whom they loved and the children they brought into the world. They knew so much of the Book. I know so little. How shall I rise from the cabin to look upon the coastland of Crete when I must impress upon my ignorant mind the contours of Sinai and Lebanon? I have no time to waste. My father being dead, there is no expounder to expound the great arguments. The Book first, as the furrows lengthen along the blue middle sea, and we subdue the separating waters that hold us from Zion—the Book first, and then the Land of the Book. I must read hard. I must feel deep. No time for Hellas.

And yet how suddenly, swiftly, urgently, it has come upon me—the lust for my own land. I have long been a wanderer now ; in so much, when I thought myself least a Jew, being most a Jew. And San Marco lured me to Venice, with all its golden and sullen glories intact. And Olympia lured me to the western edges of the Peloponnese. And there, two stones hardly stand together, though many lie tumbled among the asphodels and moon-daisies. It was not their sensuous magnificence brought me over the broad lands, as the mosaics to Venice, the stained glass to Chartres, the superb spires to Burgos. It was the poetry of Olympia, a poetry beyond ear and eye. And the poetry of those other tumbled stones, where my kinsmen went ? Was there no poetry set high on the forehead of the Judean hills, that I lingered elsewhere so long ?

This year or the other year, said I to myself, I shall doubtless go to Zion. After all, Palestine too is a Mediterranean land, and for me that is the centre and the circumference of the significant world. I shall go to Zion this year or the other year. Did not the Greeks go there too ?

But it is not because the Greeks went I go now. It is because the Jews came thence that I go. And the Jews never came thence. They never ceased from watching their sheep on the slopes of Mount Ephraim ; nor grafting their vines on the low, warm terraces below Samaria and Galilee that slope down towards Jordan. My father, expounding the Book in the small room in Doomington, had his brow among the

Eastern stars though his feet rested on the gritty floor of an English ghetto, and the red slippers on his feet were made for him by fingers long dead in a Russian ghetto.

And was I ever truly in Delphi where the Castalian spring comes down from beyond the cleft rocks of Parnassus? And if I was, and Delphi is with me now, may a man bring Delphi to Zion? Is the sea set between them for ever and for ever? Or shall the Lord again split the sea and establish a pathway? I do not know. I can see no answer now. The blue waters are thrust back from our bows. The engines drum like a doom, like a doom fulfilling itself in a place higher than Olympus or Lebanon, in a depth deeper than the depth whither Jordan or Ortygia descends.

And so, in the early morning, we passed under the lee of Crete, and the others climbed to the decks, and called and cried. And I reached down a Book from the shelf at my hand, but I did not open it. I beheld visions of other pilgrims, going to Zion, and these did not come by way of the wild parsley of Selinunte and the red anemones of Delphi. I beheld them; these men of lofty foreheads and women of pale cheeks, defiling out of Poland and Rumania, with the breath of hatred hot upon their necks. I beheld how these were herded together in the ports of all the seas, awaiting the time of their election. And at length the word came to this man and this woman, and they shouldered what little they had of the goods of this world, and a song was upon their lips and a light was in their eyes.

And others came, other pilgrims to Zion out of the

fat places, the banks, the counting-houses, of the Western countries ; but all their rich lawns were more desert than the craggy heathland of Judea, where Jerusalem is exalted upon the hills, and their rare wines were as brine upon their lips when the breath of the latter rains was blown to them, that makes fertile the gardens of Esdraelon. And some of these had already gone forth upon their wanderings, and thought to find rest in the comely halls of Gentile learning, pursuing philosophy in Padua, mathematics in Harvard, the classical humanities in Oxford by the Thames. And some had set foot, even as I, upon the golden plateau of the Acropolis, and were not aware how near, and how very far, was the hulk of Carmel that was thrust out from Palestine into the opposite sea.

And they were gathered together, these phantasmal pilgrims, driven as a whip might drive them, by a desperate voice. And some had heard the voice from the moment of their birth, but only a word spoken during the war of all nations bridged the gulfs that sundered them from their shores of dream ; and others had heard, but had not hearkened ; in Washington, in Munich, in Athens, they had not hearkened.

But now they hearkened at length. And they shall pass Crete, which is Hellas, upon the leeward, but their thoughts are upon a farther land, where of old their kinsmen broke the stubborn earth, and where to-day again their kinsmen break the stubborn earth.

CHAPTER IV  
LAND OF BONDAGE

I

WE change but we cannot die. We lose, we gain, but we remain ourselves. We journey to fulfil or to frustrate our secret dreams. But these do not abrade the perfect round of our oneness. Yesterday it was Crete, to-morrow it shall be the scuffle and hubbub of Port Said. Then the slow progress down the Red Sea with the desert upon the left hand and the right hand, spread out like two pans of molten metal. And who shall descend at Colombo to disinter entombed civilisations from the hot heart of the jungle? And who is for Penang, to tap the rubber trees of Malaya, to build bridges over roaring torrents? Who is for Elenore? Who is for Luthany?

But now there is no other land. The ship is the sixth continent and there are no others.

So thinks the captain, the small Goanese lad, the journeyer to Zion, the journeyer to Peking. So thinks the green-eyed little siren in the smoking-saloon. Cunning little devil she is! All the other women are left to their knitting in the divan. She has all the youths about her, the bridge-builders, the tea-planters.

She is as fair as a lily. But she, too, is a serpent of old Nile. She is an Egyptian. She is Cleopatra. She



speaks all the world's languages excepting English, and the adoring youths make love to her in their public-schoolboy French, seeking to convert the pen of their grandmother's aunt into a bow of burning gold.

I bid you be careful, O gallant, innocent youths. You are faring Eastward Ho ! There shall be more sirens.

## II

Port Said ! Threshold for me to the House of Bondage ! I disembark here, that I may smell the air of Egypt, as my people did once. We all disembark here, if for a few hours only.

How the young men who go forth to tap rubber and pack jute, how their eyes shine, naughtily, excitedly ! There is no chaste heart—is there ?—in the last recesses of the cathedral towns which has not thrilled a little tremulously at the mention of this place. All ports are held to be dark seas of Beelzebub, but Port Said is, *par excellence*, the wicked port. That is so, I think, not merely because it is set up as an altar, as it were, between two homes of aboriginal idolatries—on the one hand Egypt, on the other the Peninsula of Sinai. It is because at this place a perpetual progression of nice people, like these planting and bridge-building lads, disembark for a few hours or a few days, and find themselves for the first time in a welter of strange smells, bright colours, loud noises, mysterious faces, which farther upon the eastward journey of these nice travellers will seem less violent, less lawless, but here at Port Said cohere into a lewd Saturnalia.

I am not unaware of the furtive men whispering in the ears of the callow youths who have just disembarked, what astounding spectacles they have to offer down this stinking alley-way, round the second corner, and beyond the third doorway on the left. But I do not believe that these have most to do with the incomparable reputation of Port Said. For these furtive men are not unknown elsewhere—not in Berlin or Paris merely, but in well-groomed cities nearer home whose names I should dislike to mention. There is the same pantomime of the lifted shoulder, the winking eyelid, the backward pointing thumb. And they conduce to spectacles with some residuum of sophistication, even (if I do not degrade the word) to an atrocious sort of taste. But I cannot say how pitiable, how mean, these spectacles can be, in the wicked port. It is not they who emblazon it upon all the bad banners.

It is the strangeness of the large gentleman in the fez and the voluminous white robes smoking his bubbling *narghile* through a yard or two of tubing. It is the dionysiac fury of the wild woman with her barrow of artichokes, crying her wares. It is the sedimentary cup of sweet Arab coffee offered them upon a straw-matted platform in a dusky café. The nice people do not realise for their part how astounded the gentleman in the fez might be at the sight of a Wiltshire farmer smoking his clay pipe amongst his pigsties : and how the veiled lady of the artichokes would pick up her skirts and flee for terror at the sound the London milkmen conspire at five o'clock in the morning. And what a hellish sort of liquor to the Arab out of his

café might be a tankard of old ale passed to him across the counter of a public bar !

The prospect of disembarking at Port Said caused more excitement in the bosoms of our young men than any port on their long journey to the China seas is likely to do—or than Gibraltar or Marseilles did (so far as I can gather). For Gibraltar was no more to them than a transported block of Britain, and Marseilles did not perturb them, for they already had spent dizzy week-ends in Dieppe.

Now the young men on board are divided into two types, and, curiously enough, are strictly disposed according to type in the first and second saloons. In the first saloon are those meritorious young men who have laboured loyally in engineering works in the north country and in the London offices of Far Eastern oil and petrol and tea and rubber firms. They have laboured loyally, and are having their first-class passages paid to Colombo, Penang, Kobe. They are not prigs. They can play pontoon with the next man, and imbibe without discomfort the third whisky-and-soda. But they are serious young men. They will keep themselves in hand. They will do well.

The young men in the second saloon are the scions of wealthy, and sometimes ancient, families. They are, to put it simply, naughty boys. They had an uneasy life at their public schools, and sometimes a brief one. Their parents sent them up to Oxford, the dons sent them down again. It was imagined that if a sense of responsibility might be injected into them, as it were hypodermically, they would retrieve themselves. They

were permitted small bank balances, and cheque-books of their very own. Night-club piled itself upon night-club, Amurath of Bond Street succeeded to Amurath of the Burlington Arcade. They were overdrawn in a week. Thereon they threatened to marry barmaids. Whereon in solemn family conclave it was decided they must go out East, to old Potter's rubber estate, or to Blinkins, who had done so well in copra. And a grey-haired mother wept a little, and implored a little. But a stern father was adamant. They must go out second-class, though steerage was too good for them.

The serious young men and the naughty boys were equally excited as the great ship sailed majestically athwart the breakwater into the initial waters of the Canal, through a medley of bobbing boats and naked boys diving for pennies, and hotel touts shrieking frantically out of dinghies. And it surely must be a truth that the eye first beholds, out of all things disposed before it, that which the spirit would have it see. For the first thing that the naughty boys beheld, here at the gateway of the East, was a proclamation whereof each of the letters was large as a house-front: So-and-so's whisky on sale at Port Said. They cheered like school-boys on learning of an unexpected whole-holiday. They threw their toupees into the air as if they were school-caps.

But the eyes of the serious young men fell upon the prow of a ship, whereon a classical name was painted, being the name of the ship. "Cleanthis" they saw. But they did not read it so. "Clean this," they said, seriously. (But not in the manner of prigs.



For they, too, drink whisky. But they do not bathe in it.)

So the young men who had been good and had been naughty disembarked and proceeded to "do" Port Said, each with their own philosophy. "Clean this," said the serious ones. "Ha! ha! There is enough cleaning to be done in Port Said!" And the others whispered: "What is all this we have always heard? Ha! ha! Let us find out!"

But woe is me for the wicked port, they were equally disappointed. For a few silly and noxious post cards do not make a Pompeii. And a side-show or two that, so far from exciting the blood of the naughty ones, merely loosens their vomit, will affect these youths more salubriously than the volume of sermons they listened to, but did not hear, in their school and college chapels.

They go forth to the last places in the world. I doubt if these categories will long be distinguished between them, good boys and naughty boys of the first and second saloons.

They will be men. The lines of their chins will harden. The eyes will seem to recede a little into the eye-sockets. And they will remember the wicked port, and smile a little foolishly. Would they purify Cheltenham, or go seeking the Phœnician Astarte there?

### III

The last lad is aboard. The great ship heaves off down the Canal. The green-eyed maiden betakes herself to



the smoking-saloon and her admirers; the other maidens betake themselves to their knitting. I am annulled out of their crystal compactness, their integrity. I am left to go my own way. I make for Cairo.

The valley of the Nile is the great archetype of the oasis, so encompassed is it by barren sand or barren sea from whatever side you approach it. It is clear now why terrific armies fought for it and died for it. And an air of dark miracle still seems to cloak it, despite the unabating exorcism of the sun: it is easy to see now why the strange gods have sprung up along its banks more numerous than palm-trees or rushes.

I find it at once appropriate and poetic to approach Cairo by way of the Suez Canal. Southward is the region of those torrid waters which were cloven so that the Children of the Lord might pass unscathed between the walls of enchantment. The Egyptians followed in chariots. Did some wander out of their tracks, northward, this way? Is that a chariot-wheel poking rustily out of the sand?

I for my part am subduing this region in a railway train, a more astounding chariot. Beyond the junction of El Kantara extend the dry dunes of the Sinai Peninsula, where those ancient wanderers wandered for forty years. I shall reach Zion in twenty hours. But these are but the pinnacle of a pyramid, and its base is two thousand years.

There was a miracle in those old days of torrid waters cloven. There is a miracle to-day of the cleaving of torrid land. I mean the Canal itself. So vast between burning sun and burning sand extends the length of the

Canal that the great ocean-subduing liners, which in Marseilles or Port Said swaggered it like bullies among the lesser craft, now dwindle into mean little toys, when now and again the train passes. They seem hardly less substantial than the sandbanks beyond the dunes which rise from a water so hushed and deathly that they seem floating clouds which might any moment disperse.

The train passes no living creature save the abject slaves of the Canal, the dredgers, the signallers. Occasionally you perceive a tethered donkey, motionless in a patch of shade. His Bedouin master has shaved him to make one of his women a cloak. The beast is precisely the colour of the desert. He has been put crudely together out of parched clay. Hardly less beastlike than he are the bowed men tethered to ropes who drag their listless fishing-smacks along the infinite windless waters. The smacks are under full sail, but not a breath animates them to ease the task of the bowed men.

They move on so endlessly that they do not seem to move at all. They are a motionless frieze in bas-relief. They are the slaves of Pharaoh graven upon the architrave of his temple.

Nearer to Port Said a backwater ran for some distance along the Canal. Miasmatic and muddy though it seemed, it was at least not briny, for the Bedouins came in from the desert and lay down and lapped it like dogs. But now even this has ceased. The world is no more than harsh desert and sandy scrub. There is no other world.

The Nile is the frenzy of a man raving for thirst.



“AT HER FEET ALL THE THREADS OF WATER COME TOGETHER”

Plate II.



The palms, the figs, the fields of corn, the vines—these are no more than fantasy. There is no world except desert and sandy scrub.

As always in the desert lands, the change comes with astounding swiftness, again in the nature of a miracle. There is no gradual climax and petering out of greenery in an oasis. And so it is that on the journey to Cairo, when you reach Ismalieh, where the British flying men are, you have reached the sudden edge of the desert nightmare. The small town itself is a bonfire of flowers, as if the desert consumed itself, and the sparks of its burning were roses and mesembryanthemums and orchids and bougainvillæa and tiger-lilies. Henceforth you will but thread the rich black and green tapestry of the Delta. So thick and luxurious is the greenery, so lately have your eyes smarted with sandy winds and your mouth been full of the taste of them, that you are still hardly certain whether one or the other of them is not mirage—the world a desert or the world all Eden.

What else must you make of this land, where suddenly between one date-palm and another a sail cleaves its slow way and, a white sheet taking wings, you find the air streaked with the trailing legs of storks? Not less intricately than the hand with veins is this region picked out with canals and trenches. A woman holds herself like a queen, with a huge load of green stuff upon her head and children in the crook of each arm. Others are at her skirts, in legion.

She is a symbol of the fertility of this land. She has silver circlets upon her feet. She is an image of old



Nile graven in ebony. At her feet all the threads of water come together, swell into music, into dark splendour. She is more than an image: she is the Nile.

## IV

I am in Eretz Mizraim, on the road to Zion. I have fared this way and my friend has fared that way. But it seems to me this way is as wise as any. Before adventuring into the reborn land, it is well to recreate for the mind's eye the walls of the House of Bondage. For Egypt was the first ghetto, archetype of Frankfort, Toledo, Venice. It was a curiously complete anticipation of all subsequent Jewish history in the Diaspora, from Joseph in the high places to the helots in the huts of Nile mud, from Disraeli (who exerted hardly less glamorous qualities than Joseph) to the presser and buttonhole-hands in the teeming tenements of White-chapel.

The mud walls of the House of Bondage in Egypt are down. On the slopes of the hills between Jerusalem and Lydda they are raising walls of stout stone quarried by Jewish hands. The mud walls of the House of Bondage were thatched over with reeds and rushes which harboured vermin. The stone houses of the pioneers, the *chalutzim*, are neatly eaved with red tiles. Sun-browned children cluster at the doorways and clap and wave their handkerchiefs as the train chugs upward towards the city on the hills.

But this is a mirage. Here are no pioneers. This is the Nile, where the oldest of earth's dwellers harness

their surly camels. Upon the edge of the greenness are the crude tents of the wanderers, the Bedouins. The men have fierce eyes. The women have the mournful eyes of beasts. The babies sprawling naked have hardly any eyes at all, so swollen and black are they with flies.

My forbears, too, were Bedouins once, among the hundred tribes of Bedouins scouring the desert. What was there that distinguished them even so soon from their kinsmen? A song sang in their blood, their eyes were alive. And when it was rumoured that lions were abroad and the sheikhs banded together their goats and sheep and women, did the others stare enviously at the goods of the sheikh called Abraham, because his sheep were fatter and the goats sleeker and the women had more gold bracelets on their ankles? The song never ceased in their blood, the light never died from their eyes, for all that they suffered dire woe in Egypt. And the loads the overseer laid upon their backs bowed them to the ground, even like those bowed men on the sandy path who drag their fishing-boats along the windless infinitude of the Canal—images of Israel in bondage. But in the land beyond Sinai their progeny are bowed no longer. They walk erect, their necks are like bronze. The wind is in their hair.

Of old time their Lord delivered them, out of the bondage of this Egypt. This time they have delivered themselves. It is better so. A drained swamp is more meritorious than a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. To eat the bread sown by your hands, and reaped by your hands, and ground into flour by you,

and baked in the oven you yourself have constructed, is nobler than to get down upon your knees to eat a dish of ready-made manna.

The Pyramids stand on the edge of the desert against Cairo, and at the heart of the Great Pyramid is the king's chamber. Not even his ghost is there. His name is not a splendour, but an academic squabble. The Great Pyramid is the most monstrous hulk of stone in all the world; it is the supreme memorial of human servitude. And when the tall Arab lifted his voice in the darkness of the central chamber, uttering noises as meaningless as the traceries of his mosques, his voice came back to him forlorn and meaningless. And when the sound ceased, I, yielding to an impulse, found myself, too, uttering sound, which I could not have executed had I premeditated it, for it would have seemed to me mock-heroic and romantic, and quite silly. But my words had a meaning. They were not mysterious. They were not esoteric. They were pure logic, that same logic which has preserved us and will preserve us for ever, till all the polytheisms, manifest or muted, will be dissipated, and every mysticism has dwindled down into mumbo-jumbo. I, too, lifted my voice in the Great Pyramid, but not my own voice answered, "Adonai Echod!" After an interval of some thousands of years the voice came back to me, the voice of my people, erect despite the burdens that bowed them, indomitable despite all the whips of Pharaoh. And once more this instinct that possessed me bade me lift my voice—"Adonai Echod!" And the voice was of my own time and world that arose in

the king's chamber of the Great Pyramid ; the voice that pealed, not echoing my words, but confirming them, attesting them. It was the voice of the pioneers beyond the Sinai desert, the voice of the builders of roads and planters of woodlands, the makers of cities, the diggers of wells—the voice of Israel shrewd and laborious in his own land. The Great Pyramid seemed flimsy for all his titan boulders. Cheops was a poor fellow.

## V

It is a pretty irony to see, set up in the smart district of Cairo about Shepheard's Hotel, shop-signs not only in the suave European languages, but in Hebrew too. But in the ghetto of Cairo they still speak the languages of exile, in those narrow alleys that descend from the central tumult of the Mouski. You might have thought yourself in the slums of Vilna or Whitechapel, so thickly the plucked feathers of fowls carpeted the doorsteps. The denizens of the place were not native. They had been invited to Egypt by their sons who had prospered there, even as the ancients were invited by Joseph, who had prospered there. A gentleman named Rechtman conducted the Boucherie Cacher, and Mr Horowitz sold you boots and shoes. But in the Chareh el Chaouazha the ghetto was a native as it might be, and my host at the little café where I sat down and ordered a drink might have seemed in any other district a native Cairene. He sat in front of his tables with a fez on his head and a tremendous *narghile* resting on the floor beside him. He puffed and tugged away at



the small ivory mouthpiece till the petal strewn water in the glass bowl at his feet bubbled like a kettle. The paradox was that he was the best Jew of them all. Herr Rechtman, of the Boucherie Cacher, and Mr Horowitz, who sold boots and shoes, were not in the same street with him. He had an enormous Shield of David painted in his window, with a fervent "Zion" at the heart of it. He himself was an immemorial Egyptian, his name being Obeid Youseph. If he did not go back to the great prototypal Joseph, he was descended from the Hellenists at least, and his ancestors have kissed the hem of the robe of Philo. He had had time enough to develop the nostalgia for Zion. His bar, he proudly proclaimed on his signboard, was the "Café Bar de Palestine." And we duly drank wine together. But I could not help observing that if I desired to dip a bar of chocolate in it, he could provide me with Mr Swolf's chocolate from Holland. Or if I liked to abate its sweetness, I might have a bag of Colman's Blue from England. (The merits of the same were attested by an ebony lady hanging up her snow-white washing against a perspective of Cairo minarets.) His adventitious goods, that is to say, came from the Diaspora. But his wine—his wine was from Palestine, and we saluted each other with bumpers in the Land of Bondage. A wine of some merit it was, from the vineyards of Rishon-le-Zion, and the first vines had been grafted there so long ago as 1882. Turin had attested its merits some years before the war. We saluted Zion, and ate cheese and bread and olives solemnly, and filled our glasses again with the liquor of Zion. And then he



informed me that that day his young son Yacob had been initiated into the Covenant of Abraham, and might we not drink to him? But heartily, said I. And his father said, "I shall lay money by for him until his confirmation, his *barmitzvah*, and then send him to his own land; for I would not have him sell wine, as I did, and my father, and my father's father. I would have him grow it. And when he has learned the secrets of grafting and pruning and spraying and pressing, by the grace of God, he shall have a hillside of his own, and terrace it and grow the wine of Zion there."

And even as he spoke a procession I had seen earlier that same day defiled before my eyes. A small Muslim lad, at least four years old, had been taken over to a barber, that he for his part might enter into the Covenant of Mohammed. And I met the procession on its way home after the ceremony. In front, the men and lads in their tarbouches and caftans laughed and joked uproariously. Behind them a bare-headed man dipped and swayed and danced under his stick to the strains of the long desert pipes played by the musicians who followed him. This was the father of the small boy. Then the small boy himself, in a carriage crammed with other small boys who had already been initiated. The small boy was deadly pale, half swooning, but he was dolled up in magnificent embroideries. He knew himself to be the cause of all the excitement, and he was torn between vanity and anguish. The tail of the procession was a cart stuffed as full of small, squealing girls as a bag of peas. How they shrieked and squalled and pulled each other's hair! Perhaps they were

already competing as to who the favourite wife of the young initiate might be. And the desert pipes wailed, the men howled, the father danced more and more furiously. And the pale little boy held up his hands before his eyes to ward off the emissaries of Shaitan.

It seemed to me, as I looked on, that I had never beheld a more pagan ceremony. The music and the dance went back before Mohammed to the fetish-worshippers of Arabia, who beat their foreheads in ecstasy against the black stones, and who still at this late day beat their foreheads against a black stone.

And I said to Obeid Youseph, "No, verily, this is not the land of your son Yacob. This is still the place of such pagan rites as have been celebrated here from time immemorial, and earlier gods were worshipped with the reeds of the desert, the small *larchoul* and the long double *muzmar*, before the days of Osiris and Horus and Isis, and with the same reeds they are celebrated this day.

"But Yacob must go forth to the place of the One God, who has added a sense of humour and kindliness to the other attributes enumerated in our Book. I too, as it happens, am on my way thither now, and many others from many lands. Inform Herr Rechtman, who keeps the Boucherie Cacher, and Mr Horowitz, who sells boots and shoes, that there is room for them too.

"And you too, Obeid Youseph, shall we not drink a tumbler of the wines of Rishon-le-Zion, not out of a bottle, but turned on from a great vat of this same wine in the cellars of that vineyard? Indeed, Obeid Youseph of Eretz Mizraim, would that not be a notable day?"

CHAPTER V  
DAWN IN PALESTINE

I CANNOT linger in Egypt. They that came before me tarried too long. I have had the taste on my tongue and the dead air in my nostrils. Enough. That will serve.

Zagazig, the swarthy faces. Ismalieh, the British faces, the cascading flowers, the trim hedges. The desert again. Sand sifting remorselessly through the chinks in the sealed train. The dark canal and the dark desert. A liner from Suez ramming the darkness with a pole of light. The ferry-boat at El Kantara. Catholic pilgrims fingering their rosaries ; Russian priests stroking their beards ; tall Arabs standing for'ard, hitting the stars with their heads. A gentle English lady, so well-connected, so ineffably descended. And Jews. They do not talk horse-racing or Shechita (which is Ritual Slaughter), as they did in my native city. Nor stocks and shares, as they do in Throgmorton Street, in London. What is this they are saying ? So many more dunams bought, so many more might be put under cultivation this year ! This cistern might be taken as containing so much water. So much more water must be brought in from the well down the valley. They are talking English, the Jews nearest me, others German. They are talking another language,

too, but I cannot yet make it out, in the scuffle and confusion. It takes not many minutes to heave to against the shelf of Asia.

Yes, it is Hebrew, of course. The porters speak it at El Kantara, the agents. Nobody does not, excepting I, and the gentle English lady. And the pilgrims, of course, and the priests. But the Arabs speak a Semitic ghost of it. And when I ask the young man in the train in one language and another whether the corner is occupied, he does not understand. English is foreign to him and French and German, Yiddish even. No, he does not understand Italian. A tall Briton in khaki with whom I have passed a few words of impeccable English is standing near us. He wears the astrakhan tarbouche on his head, which is the distinctive feature of British uniform in Palestine. The tall Briton in khaki translates my question into Hebrew, and the young gentleman bows and makes it evident that the corner is not occupied. I blush with humiliation and strike my rucksack fiercely.

Hebrew lulls me to sleep. Hebrew awakes me. My eyes open on a long, green lowland of orange-groves. Sinai that was the evil dream of forty years, is the swift dream of a night. It is early morning. An exquisite air floods all cool space. We are at Lydda. The gentle lady from the shires in England goes on with the train to Haifa. I am for Jerusalem. The train lingers. We embark upon her favourite topic of genealogy, this thin, refined lady and I, in the crescent sonorous dawn. No, she belongs to the Warwickshire branch of the family, not to the Yorkshire. I con-

gratulate her on her choice. The Warwickshire branch goes back not merely to the Crusaders; they go back to Charlemagne.

Am I drunk with the air of this land? "Madame," I protest, "in Warwickshire I should have been astounded. But I confess that in the Vale of Sharon my stupefaction is less serious. I have a more redoubtable ancestry. I go back to the Kings of Judah. I go back to the Patriarchs of Israel!"

She looks away a little uneasily. She is not certain, after all, despite our common interest in Giovanni Bellini, that I am quite a nice person to know. The train separates us.

Another lady from England is in the train for Jerusalem. But England was only a stage on her journey. She is a Palestinian. It is on her lips I first hear the word "Jew" as if it were not a thing to qualify, to temporise over, but to proclaim with not less pride than an Anglo-Indian colonel proclaims the word "Englishman." Oh, but the pride she has in the groves of orchards and olive that the train passes! How her eyes shine as she points them out, planted and grafted and pruned by her own sisters and brothers. We halt at a small station, duly announced in English and Hebrew and Arabic. A band of young men and women from an adjacent colony get into the train. Had you allowed your mind—dazzled by the light, stupid with happiness—to go wandering for a moment, it might have seemed to you that you were transported to Bavaria of the Hackenkreuzlers, or the *gemütlich* plains of Sachsen, where the pretty maidens *wachsen*.



For here are young men in black or khaki jerkins, open at the neck, and shorts half-way down an expanse of bronze thigh. And here are girls with lustrous hair unbound or cut firm to the head. They have a strong head. You might deem them *Wandervögel*. But they are not. Kurt and Gretl are twanging litanies on their guitars to Wodin and Thor in the far Norse forests. These are Jewish lads and maidens, pioneering. These are the *chalutzim*. They find their places in the train, and suddenly the whole train shakes with the song they break into—a Hebrew folk-song, arisen as spontaneously among their own wheat as the poppies that still blaze scarlet there. And the Palestinian lady beside me suspends her English and joins in the tune, marking time with her head and fingers. Then the song ceases, and she resumes the thread of her fervent exposition.

The train has left the green valley now. We have entered the defiles of the mountains of Judea. Higher and higher we ascend towards the city on the hills. It is evident that these slopes—steeper than I had thought to find in Palestine—were terraced with vines once. The platforms are still apparent, despite the ignorant centuries which have sought to obliterate them with rubble. But be very sure, says the Palestinian lady, that the purple clusters will hang down, terrace upon terrace, to the green tops. Now and again we pass near enough to a settlement for the small children to run out to the sound of the train and shout to us and wave their hands. What red cheeks, what sturdy limbs, what lively eyes! A man must enter into closer

acquaintance with them. Are these kindred to the sallow little creatures we were and knew in Sheffield, in Pittsburgh? Of all the flowers and fruit that grow in this land, are there any of more promise?

We have ascended so high into a stony world that the houses, even of the Arabs (whose deficiencies the Palestinian lady points out with just a shade too much asperity), are of stone, not of sun-baked mud. Of a sudden, stone houses, buildings, warehouses, collect and jostle against each other. The engine shrieks. The brakes grind. We are in Jerusalem.

Now if you enter Jerusalem in a romantic spirit, like *Ivanhoe*, or *ivy*, or the *Moonlight Sonata*, you will be disappointed. You will find no assembly of *Chassidim* (those joyous mystics) at the station engaged upon a round of ritual dancing, nor a company of Muslims upon their prayer-rugs facing towards Mecca and crying upon the Prophet with their hands at the lobe of the ears. You will not even find a synod of Greek bishops sharpening their knives against the throats of a conclave of heretics from Abyssinia. You will plunge at once into an atmosphere even more thrilling than this—an atmosphere of things at once older than the hills upon which Jerusalem stands and of things newer than the latest shack in a new oilfield in Texas. The earlocks of a pious scholar from Galicia sway in the wind of onset caused by a furious Buick. An immaculate curate from a theological college in Oxfordshire gazes sentimentally upon a Bedouin shepherd bringing in his flocks, without a ghost of a suspicion that the same harmless and picturesque gentleman held up the car

in which his own Bishop was driving to Shechem, shot the Bishop's chauffeur dead and landed a bullet under the collar-bone of the Bishop's lady. And swiftly, efficiently, with decision at the corners of their mouths, the pioneers go about to perform those duties which have brought them up to the city, and must not keep them too long from the acre which must be cleared of stones and the saplings which must be cherished.

But even these, despite the amount of work to be got through, cannot quite conceal their excitement. The whole air thrills with it. You might expect the ladies in the polite suburb of Telpioth to react to it visibly and audibly. But the excitement of Palestine communicates itself far beyond the Jewish fringes, into congregations with blonde skins and ebony skins, into the hearts of serious young gentlemen bristling with fountain-pens and obscure bandits armed with rifles. Curates fumble their service at tennis. Muslim guardians of the tombs of prophets forget to ask for baksheesh. The Jews are in Palestine. Even about the flat grave-stones that ascend the Mount of Olives from the depths of Kidron, there is a shimmer of light, a movement of air. The fellaheen, the Arab labourers on the land, add unto themselves gramophones. The effendis, the Arab gentry, add unto themselves motor-cars. The Jews are in Palestine.

Not only the living Jews are in Palestine, the dead are there. But it was not of those countless dead of long ago I was reminded, the day of my arrival in Jerusalem—the countless dead who heaped themselves up to be

the walls of her cities and sanctuaries, when the stone walls were breached. I was reminded of those who died a decade ago, among their British companions, when Palestine was wrested from the Turk. It was the day of the unveiling by Lord Allenby of the great cemetery upon Mount Scopus, on the flank of the hill away from the Hebrew University. I could not help thinking it a significant juxtaposition—the monument to the men who had died that wisdom and beauty might live safely in this land which was once their fountain-head. I do not use the word “cemetery” happily of a monument which subdues itself so admirably to the landscape it is set in. And I divorce from my mind a consideration which somewhat rankled in the minds of the Jews of Jerusalem. For the day was the Jewish Sabbath, and it was felt that it was inelegant, to put it no more strongly, that the authorities should not have chosen the day for the unveiling more carefully. It meant that the Muslim sheikhs, who had been the enemies of the lads who lay under these simple stones, were represented there, and the negroid clerics from Abyssinia; but that the Rabbis of the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim were absent from the graveside of the Jewish lads.

But in that radiant air, and looking down upon that supernal landscape, we had it in our hearts to forgive, perhaps too swiftly, this sad breach of decorum. Turning away towards the city, whither the graves also face, spread out before us was such a pageant of domes and spires and towers as the world does not offer elsewhere. And upon one hand was the great trench of



Jordan that falls into the Dead Sea, and upon the other the stony plateau of Judea that breaks into the plain and the Mediterranean. And beyond the Jordan the alabaſter wall of Moab, translucent in the ſtrong ſun. And we turned towards the graves again and included in the vaſt compound were nearly two ſcore Jewish youths, and not the moſt rigorous there could but feel that both the cross on the Chriſtian ſtones and David's Shield on the Jewish ſtones were both glorified by their unprecedented contiguity. The flowers of their home places bloomed before them equally, marigold and geranium and ſtock, and ſmall hedges of roſemary were everywhere odorous in the hot late noon. And thoſe of the Jews who were London "Schneiders," tailors from London, as ſome certainly were, would not be leſs grateful for theſe flowers in the cool of the evening than Rifleman Hargreaves, who came from a ſmall town in Lancashire, and the boy named Sneath who drove a ſtraight plough over the rich tilth of Lincolnſhire. For you, O Private Mittelman, and you, O Private Goliansky, are in truth ſucceſſful where the Maccabees, your progenitors, failed.

You wrought well with your fierce weapons. But in the ſmithies of the University not far from your graves, they are forging gentler weapons to achieve the work you began with grenade and bayonet. The teſt-tubes ſeethe in the laboratories. And in edges of the horizon beyond ſtony Judea, the whet-ſtone is ſharp upon the ſcythes and upon the pruning hooks. O my London tailors, you will not reſt unhappily among the low hedges of roſemary.



CHAPTER VI  
REVERIE ON MOUNT SCOPUS

WHEN the monument was unveiled and the crowd dispersed, I turned from the youthful dead to the youthful living, from the cemetery to the Hebrew University, farther along the flank of Mount Scopus. I remembered a day in Spring a year ago, when I had climbed another and a greener hill, and looked upon a mellower University. I had wandered out of Oxford by way of Cumnor Hill, and turned on my traces and looked down over woods and willowy meadows towards the tall, grey towers.

I remembered the time, not long since gone by, of my own residence there among those quiet courts, and the fortunate days they were, tranquil or boisterous. And at that moment, looking down upon Oxford, I realised that not a day had passed but that I had suppressed in me the sensation that even in a place so excellent for beauty and learning something was lacking. As I brought back those days to mind, I could not but feel that the very ardour of my Jewish friends at the University concealed a nostalgia as little conscious as my own, but as insistent, whether, being politicians they hurled themselves into debate, or, being athletes, they hurled themselves into the Rugby scrum.

What was lacking? What more could be devised

than antique tradition and royal benefaction, amiable landscape and choice companionship, had dowered upon Oxford? How queenly she sat among the valleys, with her embroidered robes about her! What wisdom lurked under her gables and what blitheness disported in her open places! What was lacking?

Another pattern slowly imposed itself upon those lush meadows and leafy woodlands. The mazy water-courses hurrying to swell the grey Thames were annulled, leaving only the hard blue Jordan to water the barren land. These were the waste hills of Moab I beheld now, not the suave downs of Berkshire. This city blocked out beyond the stony steep, less lovely than Oxford, how much more austere it was, how much more kingly! This was Jerusalem, the city of the Shekinah, that burned of old time before the Holy of Holies and is not quenched. And the name of this hill whereon I stood was not Cumnor but Scopus, and in place of the soaring beauty of Magdalen Tower, the superb mullions of New College, centuries ago completed, I saw about me a few simple buildings which were not there the day before yesterday. There was a clank of hammers in the air, and the moan of the sawing of wood. I stood at the threshold of the newest University in the world, the University which is so old that Paris and Oxford and Heidelberg are but striplings compared with her.

My unease was gone from me. I was a stranger no longer, exiled in an exquisite but alien beauty. I knew what had been lacking. I had come into my own place.

My own place. And a year ago I had not dreamed that my fate should find me here in a score of years. Here now, not in mere fantasy, I stood upon Scopus. The professors and students were in their homes this day, this being the Sabbath. And I paced the small circuit of the buildings, looking between the growing walls by my side and the remote bastions of Moab, and meditated upon the deeds achieved and the deeds to be achieved, and upon the critics and the cynics, and those that had had faith.

I remembered those who had objected that greatness cannot be compassed merely by planning it, that merely by building a large house for the spirit you cannot coax it to inhabit there. They had pointed out that the great universities of the world have developed out of casual beginnings by divine accident rather than out of deliberate organisation by human endeavour. They did not realise that Oxford and Paris grew so leisurely because they had time to grow ; and that they persisted at all because they had luck. How many chance communities of teachers and scholars, precisely such seeds as the flowers of Oxford and Paris developed from, merely faded like a plant which has not taken deep root ? They were, and in a generation or two, were not. Their incalculable brief tale was over. Bologna, on the other hand, endured. Oxford endured. Had the dice been loaded against them, Naples or Cambridge would have sufficed to hold up the torch of learning. There was no danger that the culture of England or Italy would be extinguished for want of an altar where it might be tended. Israel, on the other

hand, had waited so long that to wait longer would have been dangerous, to act at once was not only true policy but true religion.

They forgot this also : that whereas mortal greatness has sometimes, as they point out, grown out of un-deliberated beginnings, it has more frequently been patiently planned, laboriously executed. It is the lyric, the sketch, the melody, which spring spontaneously from a happy moment ; but the epic, the fresco, the sonata, require humility and labour. It will not, therefore, prejudice the prospects of the Hebrew University that the whole of Jewish history in the Diaspora has been a conscious preparation for it, any more than it was a prejudice to " Paradise Lost " that all Milton's life had been an arduous dedication to that task. It might be said that all Jewry instituted itself a " University " in the exact mediæval sense of that term, the sense of a corporation or community devoting itself to the maintenance of its own self and its own dominant idea. The bodies of Jews were the walls and pillars and roofs of that University, for mansions less frail were denied them. None the less, age beyond age they succeeded in projecting less mystical academies into stout wood or stone. The illustrious schools of Hillel and Shammai were foreshadowings of Scopus, and the academies of Jabneh and Tiberias ; and Scopus has no easy task before it to resume the traditions of Sura and Nehardea in Babylonia. Yet not less than these, even in some senses more glorious, were the *yeshivehs* of recent and more perilous centuries, from the tomb-like cellars in Spain to the crude huts in sequestered Russian villages.





LANDSCAPE IN JERUSALEM  
*(From an oil painting by Elias Newman)*

Plate IV.





And if Scopus has high traditions to assume in purely Jewish learning, it has had doughty predecessors in secular scholarship. For during the middle ages of Jewish history, when Jew and Arab between them recreated upon the southern and western shores of the Mediterranean the glory that had passed with the classical world from the opposite shores, the Jewish academies were universities in the sense of Scopus—all knowledge was their province, divine, human, and infernal even.

To the professors of those ancient academies, the researches so far undertaken by the University on Mount Scopus would have seemed very much more diabolical than the amateur magic of their own brethren. The equipment in the laboratory of the Institute of Chemistry would have seemed to them sufficient to evoke a thousand demons, not the paltry half-dozen amenable to their own mortar and pestle, retort, skull, black cats, and salamander's liver. The actual nature of the researches upon which these too modestly attired wizards concentrated their thaumaturgy would, on the other hand, have seemed beyond measure contemptible to them. Instead of devoting themselves to *aurum potabile*, or the transmutation of base metals into gold, they describe in unexciting periodicals the "Enzymic Production of Volatile Products from Nicotine under the Influence of Tobacco-Leaf Extracts" or the "Fixation by Dispersoid of Methylene-blue within the Disperse Phase."

Yet we of a later day, though willing to admit that in the scholarship of the spirit those earlier professors

were our masters, know that precisely in such studies as these lie all our mortal prospects of discovering the *elixir vitæ* and *aurum potabile*. We know that only by a meticulous devotion to such problems as these will the dull metal of Palestine, encrusted with the rubbish of so many centuries, be converted into true gold—into a land where disease will be expunged from man and beast and crop, a land of restored water-courses, of top-heavy corn, of laden vineyards, prosperous olive-groves, fat pastures.

These problems will be tackled, it is evident, with that combination of pertinacity and intuition which have been the distinguishing features of Jewish scholarship. But there are many people, and I am one of them, who hope for loftier achievements from Mount Scopus even than the most distinguished results in exact science. For these might be achieved sooner or later by any university in the Near East; but Jewish art and Jewish philosophy, the achievement not of gifted individuals but of a race in harmony, will only be illumined again out of the ashes of their own first altar.

How bright, indeed, even now, are the prospects of such new illuminations? If modern Hebrew literature, for instance, attained so much virility and fruitfulness in alien places, the effect upon it of a university where it will be stored, discussed, propagated, will be incalculable, supported, as the university will be, by a population which already speaks more Hebrew than any other language and will shortly be as clamorous for literature as it is now for water-cisterns. I do not anticipate that

the wilder sort of genius will be nourished by the university, for he is usually shy of institutions. But it will be remembered that if Oxford rejected Shelley, she retained Swinburne; and if Gauguin must needs betake himself to a South Sea island to express his genius, Cézanne, substantially a more frantic revolutionary, kept on painting demurely at home. We cannot but anticipate the establishment on Scopus of faculties in the arts and crafts. Sometimes precept stifles genius. Rather more frequently it does not. But there is much more decoration to be done, both in the direction of filling the air with goodly sounds and of covering bare walls with goodly pictures, than the necessarily restricted number of geniuses in a given generation is physically capable of executing. There will be scope in Palestine for letters and music and painting when the wood has been hewn and the water drawn; and even before then, in the breathing spaces. There will be scope for drama no less. It can have escaped but few members of the audience who sat in the open theatre at the opening of the University, that the theatre they sat in was in the mode of the Greek theatre, which staged the noblest drama ever created by mortals. And they could not dispel the fancy as chimerical that, some day, in that same arena, a drama might be produced worthy of such antecedents, under a sky as burning blue as the Athenian and upon a hill more sacred than the Acropolis.

It will be the duty of the University to interpret Judaism, but the very interpretation will be attended by the birth and growth of an art which will in its own

way, more fitful but more sublime, resolve ancient mysteries and propound new ones. Judaism will be alive in terms of its own self, not in terms borrowed from Frenchmen or Englishmen. It was to expound the exposition of the Roman Fathers that Fra Angelico painted his frescoes ; it was to expound the exposition of Luther and Melancthus that Milton wrote the Protestant epics. To expound the exposition of our own University our poets will sing and our harpists pluck the harp.

Is it too audacious to dream that Scopus might bring back again the two ancient splendours so long faded from those shores of the Mediterranean, the splendours of the Arabs who persist without splendour and the Greeks who are dead? It was the Jews and the Arabs, in the earlier Dark Ages—when Europe was as distracted by the wars of creed as she is to-day distracted by the wars of commerce—it was the Jews and Arabs who held the torch high upon the northern littoral of Africa and illumined the darkness of the plateaux of Spain. What a sodality might be restored between Jews and Arabs, housed in intricate philosophies and shadowy courts, taking equal delight in the fretting of logic and cedar-wood, the interweaving of rhymes and embroideries.

But northward shone a splendour more august than this, where the acres of scarlet anemones sweep from Delphi towards the sword-thrust of the Gulf of Corinth, where the tawny ruin of Sunium arrests the Aegean wind. Yet the Jews who gather upon Mount Scopus have returned from an Odyssey more heart-breaking



and perilous than ever the worshippers at Delphi or Sunium engaged on, and out of their wars against gods and men might extract an ore to be fashioned into shapes not less grand than Prometheus or the Parthenon.

## CHAPTER VII

### DAY OF REVELATION

THERE is something a little shocking to the western traveller in Palestine that he must link up by automobile the shrines of his pilgrimage in that country. It is true that there is no compulsion exerted upon him not to use his own legs or the four legs of a mule. But it is, after all, hardly decent to expect a man to turn down petrol when it is there. He feels a vague sort of chagrin that petrol should be there at all.

But if the western traveller be a Jew, he does not find the smell of petrol and the noise of self-starters distressing. Palestine to him is a living proposition, a continuous and organic entity, whose heart-beats, it is true, were suspended frequently by sudden violence or the more insidious and protracted violence of imposed inertia. But the chambers of the heart were not disintegrated. And now the valves do not function again because of the injection of any mere financial or political strychnine. The blood is flowing back into the heart again and out of the heart again with the rhythm of a creature awakening out of a long trance.

So that such a sentimental and passéistic Jew as would scream with horror to see a funicular ascend the Acropolis along the track of the Propylæum into the Parthenon, pays his piastre for his bus-fare in Jerusa-

lem without turning a hair. If he loads the milk of the cows of Esdraelon upon motor-vans to feed the children of Haifa, it is because that is a more expeditious mode of transporting milk than any more ancient ; and because in the natural order of things the Philistine coastland has entered into the orbit of Judean operation. Palestine to him is not a coloured slide in a magic lantern. It exists not merely during Sabbath evening treats but for seven days and seven nights weekly.

I for my part, therefore, felt no unfitness in taking my seat in a stout Buick at the Damascus Gate, although in countries whose history is less reverend than Palestine I have a pathological distaste for any mode of progression which is not slow and uncomfortable. I have even avoided beautiful country that I might not pass through it on a train. I preferred the slithery plank of a cement barge in the lagoons of Venice to the suave bosom of a gondola. If my skill and endurance had been adequate, I should have swum from Corfu to Ithaca rather than accept the indignity of a steamer. Though I talked with Marinetti and shook hands with Mussolini, it was not their Italy but Virgil's and Fra Angelico's that I haunted. For all these were lands I looked at as a man looks at a painting and listens to a poem. Palestine was a land where I myself was a blade of grass.

The metaphor at this juncture is not felicitous. Should a man say less a blade of grass than a cog in the engine ? He does not trouble himself with metaphors at the Damascus Gate. Here the Arabs gather together bartering sheep and goats. The tiny kids have a pocket

of sacking tied about their jaws so that they shall not nuzzle the udders of the dams. Other barterers sit among tottering pyramids of water-pots, black and red, moulded by their own crude thumbs. A Greek priest goes by under an umbrella vast enough to shadow the whole caravanserai. A small Jewish boy is selling celluloid combs from Nuremburg.

But our Jewish chauffeur from the Crimea has filled up with petrol. We could all day long analyse into its elements the motley of the Damascus Gate, and find at the day's end we had ignored a streak yellow as a melon and a patch scarlet as the blossom of hibiscus. We set forth to see what land this is—this Palestine lost so long ago and in this our time recovered. Or in a measure recovered. We must settle accounts gently and honourably with that tall Arab goat-herd bartering his goats ; and with that sergeant of the English police, who stretches his arms out against the Damascus Gate as England stretches out Lancashire and Yorkshire from the vertebræ of the Pennines. Our journey was to Nablus that day, where Abraham, our father, pastured his sheep, the village in that green valley being then known as Shechem ; and beyond Nablus, journey's end was to be Ain Charod, a colony of the lustiest sons of Abraham, over in Esdraelon, under the hills of Gilboa. But not many paces northward upon this journey from the Damascus Gate, England sets herself down so comfortably and with such sweet assurance that you might think that those stony hills of Judea are indeed the Pennines and that they will break beyond the southern skyline down into a green

dale of Derbyshire and that it is time for tea and there will be scones and buttered buns and, if you are lucky, strawberry jam. For here is the English Cathedral, and the school, and the playing-fields. And the architecture of close and chapel is so sublimely unaffected by Roman or Romanesque or Arab, so pleasantly and yet so epically unaware of just what light and air these are in Palestine, and what responses they must impose in style and material upon any minds else, and the curates in the cloisters are so completely curates, and do so properly supervise the bowling and the batting of the small boys at the nets, that where can we be but in England, unless all the five continents are England and England was Ur of the Chaldees and Thebes of the Bœotians no less than Moreton-in-the-Marsh in Worcestershire?

The batting of the small boys at the nets—but what swarthy small boys they are, the poor, pale sons of the Arab Christians! And who is that small boy, so white and wan, that hides behind the trunk of an olive-tree, and he has grey washed eyes, and his shoulders are bent with profound study like a scholar of threescore years, though he cannot yet be eleven years old? He wears a round fur cap upon his head and a black caftan goes down the length of the thin body to his heels. And in his eyes there is an expression of wonder and terror and a furtive glint of envy.

This is Yossel, this is a son of the *Chassidim*, and with all reverence, I protest a doubt whether the learned bishop of the Anglicans yonder in his study has a head so crammed with theology and divine rhetoric. He



does not know, poor child of the *yeshivehs*, what satanic convolutions these are of young men who hurl balls upon long unretentive spoons, to be hurled thence again in mystic parabolas. But he hears the sallow boys of the Arab Christians—even these—laugh, and sees their cheeks flushed with excitement. It is a thing of the devil, surely, but his heart yearns. He shuffles onward again to the *yeshiveh*, his small, peaked face like a lamp, pale and white and holy.

All morning as we drove over the stony uplands of Judea I could not dispel the memory of those anxious, wistful eyes: not even at noon, as I talked with Isaac, High Priest of the Samaritans in Nablus; or late that night when I talked with the spectacled scholar in Ain Charod, seated on the ground by Gideon's water in the throaty hush of the eucalyptus-grove. And to our moving isolation here upon this lofty and rocky land which broke down upon the left into an invisible plain and an incredible sea, and on the right broke down into the deep trench of Jordan, the hot wind came in from the desert. And this wind, which is called the *khamsin*, gave to the days that followed a quality of doom and ultimate issues, backgrounding each of their moments against the round, bright disk of eternity. So that though our journey across the Judean plateau, and on to the plateau again beyond the green interruption of Nablus, took no more than a few hours, till we found ourselves at length in the valley of nations which is Armageddon, it seemed that all time deployed before us, and that we stood still, our four wheels turning round in their own places upon a road that fled under

them. The rocks, the sparse groves, the minarets upon hill-tops, the gendarmerie-posts in defiles, unrolled themselves before us as from some gigantic spool. A light of apocalypse held the enormous heavens. Histories flickered and were extinguished among the folds of the mist, histories that obeyed no law of coherence or precedence. Now the light gleamed yellow upon the breast-plates of Crusaders till it seemed that the metal was brass molten by the heat. The cross flared upon white banners, and the ranks of Assyria bore down and extinguished it. Muslim and Egyptian crashed in hollow war. The Maccabeans cried "Holla, Lord of Hosts!" till the thin word was drowned in the brazen idolatry of Edom. But the mist that opened, closed to again. Only one white small face persisted, the ear-locks swinging rhythmically in the level gusts of the *khamsin*—the small face of Yossel, the child of the *Chassidim*, looking strangely upon the Christian lads trafficking with bats and balls in the playing-fields by the English Cathedral. The small shoulders turned resolutely away towards the stacked shelves of the *yeshiveh*.

Why did he persist so? Why did he so dominate the scheme of that tremendous day? Why did he outlive Egypt, Assyria, Byzantium, Rome, that for one moment emerged spectrally out of the mist and in a moment were extinguished? How did he give meaning and design to the fabric? On the one hand the Samaritans of Nablus, on the other the *Chalutzim* of Ain Charod, the flickering armies between, and the tiny, earnest face impending above them all?

The key could not be withheld, upon this day of apocalypse. Whether to a waking or a sleeping hour the meaning must be vouchsafed at length. The child hung over me like a cloud in the wooden shack where I slept at Ain Charod. I awoke with a knowledge of his significance made apparent. The child contracted out of the sky he filled, became solid substance, distilled from the cloud that hung over me. He lay sleeping peacefully in Jerusalem somewhere, his head pillowed upon his hand, the exposed ear-lock lying across his pale cheek like a raven's feather.

I perceived as I looked upon the colony of Samaritans in Nablus the doom we had avoided. I realised as I looked upon the pioneers in Ain Charod the destiny we were making for. It was Yossel, the small *Chassid*, who had kept us from the Samaritan doom. It was the unquenchable fervour of Yossel that flowered in the groves and gardens of Ain Charod. I perceived that the destruction of the Temple was not the greatest calamity but the greatest fortune of the Jewish race. I perceived that whereas our blood brothers, the Samaritans, who were an equal race with us half a thousand years before Christ, are now, having remained in their place, negligible, pitiable, a little torn community of one hundred and ninety souls cooped up in a ghetto hardly an acre wide—we, the Jews, having been scattered like chaff upon all the winds, are a unity of fourteen million souls, with no ignoble past record and present achievement in art, politics, science, and with the five continents for our ghetto.

Yet this was less than half of the tale the small child

taught me. He taught me how, the doom of Nablus being by that old violence frustrated, he it was in the inter-time who had been the cement of the diffused race, his ear-locks had held like a stout cable the fragments of the race together. Those pieties and orthodoxies which had seemed so banal to pert minds in the intellectual magnificence of freshmanhood, had had more authority than papal bulls and the firmans of empires. They had prevented by their universality the establishment of a thousand disjointed colonies of Samaritans in York, Vilna, New Orleans, Oran, which would have petrified like this curious fossil at Nablus in mid-Palestine, or have mouldered into dust like those Samaritan offshoots which existed until some centuries ago in Damascus, Cairo, and Gaza.

Nor did the tale stop here, for futurity was more essentially his theme than acts and chronicles. He spoke of a day which has dawned for the annulment of Diaspora, of the sundered parts of the spirit reassembled in Zion. I was aware that if Yossel of the *Chassidim* might uproot himself from the mediæval darkness of the Galician ghetto, with his soul unquenched by centuries of sequestration from light and air, then the task of returning was mere child's play to any fat financier from Hamburg or hundred-per-cent.-American Israelite in the stock exchanges of the Middle West. Not in his own person might little Yossel throw off his beaver hat and caftan to assume a pair of shorts and sandals in the tilth-land of Ain Charod. But thither it was his eyes yearned ; and his own son would take in hand a dunam of rocky soil on the lower slopes



of Gilboa. And if Yossel's son, upon the Sabbath and upon feast-days, did not resume the stuffy skirt and the arctic hat which his ancestors had brought with them to Palestine, that would be not because they were contemptible garments, but merely unsuitable. He might with not less enthusiasm carry the palm and reverse the citron upon the Feast of Weeks; not stubbornly, as of old time, in the teeth of the jeerers, not because to do these things was immemorial custom, but because, in this land precisely, amongst these harvested fields, to do these things was a simple and natural ceremonial, the mood of the month interpreted through apt symbols. Each year, when the son of Yossel the *Chassid*, and his son's sons, did these things, it would not seem that these things had been done for countless centuries before, so much as that they were done this year for the first time.

So it was that Yossel expounded his tale and, finishing, curled up on his mattress in the dark stone house in Jerusalem. And I turned on my side on the trestle bed they let me sleep on, in the colony of Ain Charod, in Esdraelon. The mooing of the cows awoke me, and the hens clucking, and the children calling to each other across the clear air.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE APPROACH TO GIDEON'S FOUNTAIN

THIS colony of Ain Charod was the first Jewish colony I alighted upon in Palestine. Whatsoever stage it had attained, whatever its character might be, it was something more than a collection of wooden shacks or stone houses, flanked by outhouses, topped by cisterns and grain-elevators. Obviously a traveller may meet settlements like these, more comfortable or less, in the backwoods and waste places of any new country between Australia and Alaska. But Palestine is not a new country. It is an ancient, an exhausted country. The backwoodsman on the Gold Coast has a simple enough proposition to tackle. He must make his holding work. Sometimes the actual physical job he has set himself up against, is more desperate than anything the Palestinian has to tackle (though it is possible that certain of the tasks undertaken by the Jews in malarial marshes and upon salty dunes are actually as formidable as any in the lands of virgin colonisation). If the backwoodsman does not make his holding work, he is either ruined or will pack his traps up and trek farther.

But if the Jewish colonist whom the traveller comes upon in Palestine is ruined—I take him generically for the moment—then the greatest opportunity is ruined which history has afforded his race. I would not care to

speculate what the effect would be of this failure upon the race itself. The race seems impervious to ruin. But it seems arguable that the consummation which Tiglath-Peleser and Haman, Titus and Torquemada failed to achieve, might follow upon a blow aimed by the race itself at its own heart. It is possible that the conditions under which the experiment is being initiated, and will be for a time continued, are of such a nature that the experiment is doomed to failure—those conditions external to the race, I mean, such as the complex of political relationships in which the Jewish experiment is nothing more than one of the hundred constituting elements. I mean also the domestic problem involved by the established existence in this country of a large population with entirely different instincts and standards. Such conditions as these may doom the experiment to failure—or the essential character of the Jewish race, which may, during the two thousand years in which it has not occupied this country, have totally unfitted itself for such an occupation a second time.

Whatever the cause of failure might be, it might be questioned whether the race itself could survive it with the ancient vitality, or even survive at all for long. Acute diplomacy and hard manual labour, united with every sort of moral and spiritual fervour, would all have been exercised and all have proved fruitless. A nucleus of piety might persist for a time, believing as of old in the personal intervention of Jehovah and the physical appearance of a Messiah, but this, too, would slowly bleed to death. Or it would petrify into a

curiosity, like the Joanna Southcott Christians or the Samaritans of Nablus. It would not have the intellectual and spiritual prestige which would hold together the elements scattered throughout every city in every country. During a certain century or the century after, there would be no Jews. It would not be relevant here to decide whether this might be fortunate or unfortunate. I cannot help feeling it would be very dull.

Hence the first Jewish colony he alights upon is something more to the traveller than its crude self, though its crude self is a gallant enough proposition. Its inhabitants have set themselves the task of making into a fat land a region which antiquity itself had almost exhausted, a region which has been sterilised by the residence there during a thousand years of the most spiritless of earth's husbandmen. But, as I have tried to indicate, it is more merely than a problem in agricultural economy. It is more than the Old Jerusalem those colonists are pursuing. It is the New Jerusalem they have set their hearts on. They are the womb out of which the New Jerusalem might be delivered. Whether this city will again occupy that same region which ancient awe has already hallowed, or whether it shall be a city standing up against the sea, towards which the outskirts of a Haifa, a Tel Aviv, are at this moment blindly reaching like roots or waters that are some day to burst into some unexpected blossom or fountain—who shall decide, saving these stalwart men whose sole present duty seems to plough the land apportioned to them and hew out the quarries. Or whether the New Jerusalem shall be a city in a sense

of which we have no conception now, being a thing not assembled block by block and house against house, like a sweaty crowd clamped shoulder to shoulder—but a thing diffused across tracts of greenery and air, held in coherence by modes of transit and transport of which we have dimmest inklings now—these are the issues to be decided by these men. They are the kingly architects, though the houses they dwell in are put together out of cheap yellow pine and roofed by corrugated iron. They are the Jewish cardinals in conclave at our Vatican, whose jerkins of coarse cloth are costlier than scarlet and ermine.

It was with some such consciousness that we found ourselves approaching the colony of Ain Charod, which is a *kvutzah*, a communal group, in the Valley of Esdraelon. The toneless sun of *khamzin* lay upon the morose crags; the sparse olives held out their leaves stiffly, like metal sculpture. The accidents of the landscape were eliminated in that unifying air. They had no contours which were not majestic. On the projecting branch of a holm-oak perched a black and white stork, solitary, the genius of that evening, presenting impartially the Yea or Nay, the Life or Death, which it is for them who plough the thin furrows of Esdraelon to choose, affirm, and establish.

We had descended from the last low hills of Samaria. We lurched over a region of no tracks. The arid unfructified earth humped itself into a mound of uneven desolation. So lamentable it seemed that the mean beasts of the desert, jackal and hyena and the hatchet-jawed lizard, might have spurned it, sooner seeking out



THE ARID EARTH HUMPED ITSELF INTO A MOUND OF DESOLATION





for themselves rifts in solid rock, which is earth's own proud substance, rather than permit their homes to be in a dump of mud, so lousy and forlorn.

And the name of this place was Jezreel, and the dwellers therein were the choosers of Nay between Yea and Nay, of Death between Life and Death. They had been worshippers of Astarte once, and four hundred priests ministered to them. Here Ahab built his ivory house and Jezebel flaunted her painted cheeks. The dwellers in these hovels sit among their rags, their blind eyes turned inward upon a chamber darker than dark nights. They are the impassive agents of sterility, as the priests of Astarte were its active agents, resolving it into ritual and formula. Furtive daughters of Astarte and Jezebel! The car heaved round upon a huddled group of girls, raking them with the beams of the headlights. Their eyes were large with terror and disbelief. For ten seconds their eyes did not blink. Then suddenly the pitiful creatures ducked, and sped wildly away with a low, windy cackling.

I could never henceforth see the Arab villagers of Palestine without recalling this picture of the wide-eyed girls of Jezreel, scuttling away from the stern and steady lights of the car. I saw their wide eyes time and again; as for instance, in the red lands that lie behind Jaffa at a point where the fields of an Arab peasant and a Jewish *kvutzah* march side by side. The Arab and his Jewish neighbours were ploughing their fields. The Arab proceeded to yoke to his camel the curved root of a tree. So his ancestors had ploughed his fields for

countless generations. The Jews put into gear a motor-tractor of a size and efficiency such as I had never witnessed before, any more than the Arab, for I, too, am used to territories no more enormous than the comely farmlands of England, and this was the sort of enginery with which the Americans subdue the Middle Western continent. As the motor-tractor thrust itself forth and down with the clangour of five express-trains, I saw in the eyes of that little Arab peasant precisely the same terror and disbelief as I saw in Jezreel that night. The next day, as we passed through Jezreel again, the maidens came forward timidly to touch the bonnet of the car. So, too, I saw the Arab peasant a little time later fingering tremulously the levers of the motor-tractor. It may be that the daughters of those maidens of Jezreel will themselves establish a garage over the foundations of Jezebel's watch-tower, and that that Arab peasant himself will cast aside his wooden plough and request the offices of the motor-tractor for half a morning. A garage is less picturesque than a mud hovel, and a motor-tractor than a wooden plough. But the first is less lousy and the second more efficient. There is nothing to be done about it.

Between Jezreel of the Arabs and Ain Charod of the Jews there is only a faint track at present, though the citizens of both are related in Abraham. The day is not far distant, I trust, when there will be a high-road; for if Jezreel has been dying there for so long and is not dead yet, the only hope for Palestine is that Jezreel shall be duly reckoned with. And if it has taken so long for Ain Charod to be born, and the infant is

kicking so lustily despite this protracted parturition, Ain Charod also must be duly reckoned with. And a high-road must be set down between the mud hovels and the wooden barracks. By that time goodly houses in stone or brick may have taken the places of the hovels and the barracks equally.

That night we found it difficult enough to keep to the track between Jezreel and Ain Charod, if track there is. The whole inertia of the land seemed sullenly to oppose us. Stones clanked indignantly up against our wings. Tall whip-like grasses struck us. We thrust our radiator into deep pits or endangered our axle upon meaningless cairns. The inertia of the land, left inert so long, resented us. This was a country of Islam, of submission. What impiety was this that came out of the West? The Crusaders were bad enough, but they were in the tradition, at least. They came with pikes and lances, with vats of boiling lead, to win Jerusalem. But who were these later Crusaders who came to win Jerusalem with tractors and threshing-machines? Who? Who? Clear above the labouring engine came the petulant hoot of an owl. .

But the lights in the colony of Ain Charod shone imperturbably, blocked out against the hillside of Gilboa. So we lurched and stumbled over the barrenness, recognising in these lights not merely a beacon to us benighted wanderers in Esdraelon, but a beacon to wanderers in the tortuous alleys of Vienna and Whitechapel, a beacon that outshone for jaded eyes the blind lights of Broadway.

And of a sudden woods were about us, and the cool-

ness that is in woods even upon the days of *khamsin*. There was the sound of water also, and this was the Well of Charod where Gideon was encamped over against the Midianites, and, bidding his troops drink, chose out of them those that drank decently and alertly. He chose three hundred men. The colonists of Ain Charod are three hundred at this day. They are not less potent for the further history of Israel.

Two young men came forward to meet us, seeing our lights and hearing our engines, as we swung out of the eucalyptus-grove. One of these limped, for he had a wooden leg. He had lost his own fighting in the Jewish Legion, in Palestine here, against the Turks. It seemed to me appropriate and touching that it should be upon Jewish land that he must henceforth stump on his wooden leg, in the country where he had himself suffered grievous loss, and his brother had his head shot from his shoulders. It was Jewish land in Palestine, for the purchase of which the pennies of little seamstresses no less than the thousands of rich merchants had been contributed. It was a purchase affected under the sanction of England, with the assembled nations agreed upon that sanction. The young soldier of the Jews had been luckier than others. They had removed his leg from the groin, but Fate had afforded him great consolation. His companion came forward, blinking through spectacles, and with more than a hint of bent back and stooping shoulders. Though he follow the plough another score or two score years his shoulders will never be quite straightened. Once for days and nights, almost without pause, he studied



physics and chemistry in his small attic. He passed his degrees with gold medals. But he heard Gideon's water calling under the flank of Gilboa and he swept his papers aside and came over to be one of the new three hundred. His shoulders will never be straight; but I saw his small boy in the kindergarten next day, and heaven knows that all the nurseries of Eton house no small child with straighter limbs.

We dropped our kit in the lame soldier's hut. It contained two trestle beds beside his own, a small table, a rickety chair, and a soap-box. We washed in a bowl of Gideon's water, having resisted the temptation, thirsty though we were, of crouching down and lapping up the water before we washed in it. We were in time for supper, they told us, at the communal dining-hall. The lame soldier was a student no less than the physicist, as we gathered from the heap of abstruse German volumes of sociology by his bedside. We went over to the hall and it took us no long time to discover that our neighbours, both men and women, at the long, bare table where we sat down, were also people of education. The tables were equipped with basins of black bread in chunks and bowls of sugar, where the flies settled, despite the switches of grass suspended from the roof-beams to lure them. The switches were already over-populated. On each table was placed a rough wooden trestle to hold a tea-pot. There can be no larger tea-pots in the world than the tea-pots of Ain Charod, for tea is the drink of the colonists. It is, indeed, the supreme drink of Palestine. Tea not with lemon, in what is mistakenly

considered, outside Russia, to be the Russian mode—but pure tea, tea with large lumps of fly-blown sugar, tea copious enough to float Noah's Ark. A dish of soft boiled carrot supplemented the chunks of black bread and the tea. This was the complete evening meal of the three hundred, after a more than twelve-hour day of sweltering heat in cow-shed and tilth-land. Their sole luxury was yesterday's paper which was brought in during the meal. They fingered it, glanced avidly up and down its columns, not so much for its own sake, though the *Davar* is an intelligent and well-conducted journal, but because it was print, it had affinity with books and learning, with the culture they had forsworn.

Now I do not wish to suggest that the majority of the Jewish colonists in Palestine, or even the greater number of the three hundred in Ain Charod, are graduates and artists who have thrown exalted careers aside in order to hew wood and draw water. A fair proportion of them are precisely of the same intellectual and social order as Gentile colonists might be ; though in the nature of things these are rather tailors and carpenters by origin than farm-labourers and bargees. But that was not my predominant impression in Ain Charod. And time after time, during my wanderings among the Jewish colonies, I found myself confronted by men and women with precisely those fine brows and eyes which distinguish the Jewish lawyers, artists, organisers who, with an almost discouraging persistency, are everywhere found at the head of their professions.

It is not my intention to plaster the heads of the colonists with a rose-pink nimbus. They are too busy with hose-pipes and shovels to attitudinise with the palms of martyrdom. And they have a sense of humour. They are something more than martyrs, by which is meant witnesses. They are themselves performers. And seeing that they are doing that which they would each and all have given a limb to do, during these two thousand years of exile, they call less for pity than for envy.

Yet they sacrifice much. That is their chief privilege. All of them, the men of rare and ordinary minds equally sacrifice to the children whatsoever ease and comfort is to be wrung from these stubborn acres. Whilst they themselves sleep on hard trestles and feed on black crusts, their children sleep and feed like little lordlings. The children are not pampered, of course ; but if their parents must go on short commons, they know nothing of it. The future is with them. They are the future. That, more than any other, is the religion of the older ones. There are no heretics.

It is not extraordinary that parents should make sacrifices for their children, and it would not be worth speaking of if the discrepancy between the conditions of the elders and the children were not everywhere so startling. It is possible, even, that it will not be found economically feasible to maintain the children in such ideal, and comparatively expensive, circumstances. None the less, though it gave me great pleasure, I took that sort of self-sacrifice for granted, for you need not journey so far as Palestine to witness it. But the

impression I received that night in Ain Charod which was to be frequently corroborated elsewhere, was of a rarer sort of sacrifice. For these men sacrificed something more than creature-comforts, on behalf of a vaster company than their own children. They sacrificed scholarship, the arts, their own essential spiritual selves, to become hewers of wood and drawers of water. They have gone further than even the writer, Chesterton, demanded, a critic not sympathetic with them and their cause. He would have their cause tested, he writes, "not by whether Jews can climb to the top of the ladder but whether they can remain at the bottom; not by whether they have a hundred arts of becoming important, but whether they have any skill in the art of remaining insignificant. A Jewish state will not be a success when the Jews in it are successful, or even when the Jews in it are statesmen. It will be a success when the Jews in it are scavengers, when the Jews in it are sweeps, when they are dockers and ditchers and porters and hodmen."

Now that is a difficult enough test. For if it were demanded of the writer, Chesterton, being possessed of a measure of literary talent, that he put aside its exercise and become a docker or ditcher or porter or hodman, I avow that it would be as much as he could manage to do so—though I should not like to think he could not manage it, if he thought the cause were splendid enough.

But the colonists in Palestine have done more, I say, than Mr Chesterton asked of them. It might be easy to remain at the bottom of the ladder, but these doctors



and lawyers and musicians of Ain Charod have thrown themselves there. And if they have been capable of putting aside those talents which the conditions under which they have existed for twenty centuries have bred and sharpened in them, the worthy writer need not fear that under the natural conditions out of which the dockers and ditchers of his own race are born, the dockers and ditchers of Palestine will be born also, generation upon generation.

It was not far from here that Jacob pillowed his head upon a stone and saw the angels ascending and descending the ladder slung between earth and heaven. Now in Ain Charod I had a vision of coarser creatures than angels, who did no more than descend a ladder, and the ladder was not Jacob's, but Mr Chesterton's. And having descended, they lustily dug and trenched and irrigated the land at the foot of the ladder. And clover grew and wheat grew and other crops in their season. And the flowers of clover and the ears of wheat did not glitter like the stars at the summit of Jacob's ladder. But the cattle of Esdraelon browsed among the clover and the ovens of Ain Charod made the wheat into bread. And the Jewish dockers and ditchers and porters and hodmen washed down the wheat of Esdraelon with draughts from the fountain of Gideon.



CHAPTER IX  
PLATO IN ESDRAELON

IN the dining-hall of this colony of Ain Charod in Esdraelon, there is a collection of the world's vastest tea-pots. Each of them seemed, that evening of my arrival, to be as capacious as that monstrous baroque dome with which they have capped the motley Sicilian-Gothic glories of the Cathedral at Palermo. The tea-pots at Ain Charod are, however, more appropriate to the surrounding architecture, and the throats of the colonists are adequate to them. When the last mouthful of tea had been drained through the last cube of sugar the colonists, and I amongst them, arose to wander among the groves of the colony in the cool of the evening.

A spectacled scholar who came from Galicia took me in hand and explained the workings of a *kvutzah*. "A *kvutzah*," said he, "is a co-operative farm, where the members work and live as a single unit, all domestic and agricultural labours being conducted under a unified administration." But I confess that it was the human drama rather than the technical workings of Ain Charod that enthralled me. The members of these communal groups for the most part emanate from Eastern Europe, where the conditions they have lived under for the last few centuries predispose them the more readily to these

radical experiments in practical and domestic politics. A Rhenish or an English Jew finding that he had smoked his day's ration of cigarettes, would have felt more discomfort in the thought that he might not smoke another unless he were prepared to go over to the store-house and take out a mortgage on his to-morrow's ration. But to my spectacled Galician guide it did not seem embarrassing. And it had not troubled him earlier in the evening to go over to that particular nursery where the children between two and three years old are housed, and demand his ration of one hour to be spent in the company of his baby.

I do not wish to suggest that a tabulated schedule of periods is handed over to children and parents, determining how much time they should spend with each other. But in practice it amounts to much the same thing. For the parents are hard at work all day long, and the places and times of their meals do not coincide. There is no doubt that the food prepared for the children is wholesomer and pleasanter than the confections which the ordinary harassed working mother can serve them. There is no doubt also that the children and parents enjoy only the best of each other. The parents are a gracious anticipation to the children, the children a fragrant fact to the parents. In a more normal organisation, which faced itself with such a quantity of hard work, how easily might the parents be querulous tyrants, the children querulous nuisances.

This evening my Galician student had had no more time than to spend half-an-hour in his child's nursery. The next evening he saw his way clear to finishing

his work an hour or two before the evening meal. He would stalk over to the nursery like a conqueror, assume his child from her companions, and carry her crowing and squealing to his own hut, among the barracks of the married people. Two whole hours perhaps. The mother would prepare the tin bath, the father would prepare the fur cap. The mother would fill nose and eyes with soap-suds. The father would make up for it by growling like a bear. The child, naked and rosy, would sing snatches from a Hebrew nursery rhyme. There would be tale-telling, clapping of hands, crooning of songs. The last syllables would falter on the child's lips, the fir-cone she played with drop from her hands. The bear would place the small white-clad creature over his rough shoulder and thread the cypresses and casuarinas on his way back to the nursery. He would tread gently among the laden cots to the empty one. He would lift aside the mosquito-net and deposit his frail burden on the white moon-gleaming sheet. He would draw down the net again and tiptoe to the door of the nursery, the gentlest-footed bear in all Palestine.

That might be to-morrow. Two whole hours perhaps. No more time to-day than for a half-hour. The nurses in the nurseries must be left to it to look after the children. We that were chemists of note in Galicia have the cow-sheds to clean in Ain Charod, the shoes to cobble, the wheat to cut down and bind into stooks. But in the colony there is work to do even for the small children, even for the oldest of the grandparents. The children have their plots to tend, their own meals

to wash up in their turn. They devote themselves to their tasks with the delightful sobriety of childhood, so that it is not possible to distinguish whether they find play or work more enchanting. The grandparents are less elastic. It is not so easy for them to find a niche for themselves in a polity so entirely unlike the life that has bent and gnarled them for threescore years and more. They sit outside their hut in the evening, dumb and incredulous with happiness. They recall their own childhood in the Eastern ghettos. It seems hardly possible that these bronzed men and women are their own children. They sit at the benches in front of their hut, and talk in low tones, or do not talk at all, but sit there, marvelling. But these grandchildren are surely not of their line? Are they Jews, even? Is there not something almost Gentile, almost impious, in such clear eyes and sun-burnished hair? They potter off in the morning to the tasks they have forged for themselves with their feeble fingers. Old Reb Pinchas makes small boxes when he can pick up enough odd chips of wood. There is nothing much to be done with them, nothing at all, I believe. None the less, he has a secret dump of small boxes, which increases steadily. Some day there will be a use for them. He will be declared the colony's benefactor, the most clear-sighted of them all, that triumphant day when the paramount necessity of small boxes is at length declared. Mimma Rochel cleans spoons. She has not much use for forks and knives, but a tarnished spoon excites her feverishly. She does not labour upon Sabbaths and holy days; and she has added to these the birthday of His Majesty



King George of England. It is not known how she keeps in touch with that anniversary and what complex of emotions and events has so sanctified it for her. But she has added it to the Sabbaths and the holidays. During all the other days in the year, Mimma Rochel cleans spoons.

I cannot decide which group more thrilled me, that evening at Ain Charod, the old people sitting outside their hut like a crowd of Abrahams and Sarahs whom the angels of the Lord have already visited and dowered with offspring, or that other group of the philosophers in the eucalyptus-grove. The group of the ancients was very wistful, but the group of the young people, the philosophers, seemed to me rich in significance and beauty. We came upon them suddenly on our return from the grotto of Gideon's fountain, a place itself so charming that I must pause there a moment. It had not charmed me less to find the waters regulated by a system of pipes and drainage-grids and the well itself protected by a railing; for the whole of this region of colonies, which they call the Nuris Tract, is fed from this source. I could not conceive Gideon raising any objection to its present uses, by which a good farmer can be tested, no less than he tested his good soldiers. I learned with delight of the part played by the grotto in the annual festivities of the Feast of Weeks. It corroborated in me the conviction that had been growing upon me since my arrival in Palestine; that those ceremonies which in the lands of the more genteel Diaspora had inevitably become either self-consciously truculent or dispiritedly sapless, will raise



themselves to a vernal vigour again in the soil from which they have been uprooted. It was a phenomenon hardly to be wondered at that Jewish families in Kensington celebrated the pleasant rites of Christmas with a good deal more piety than the Feast of the Harvesting, which has no relation at all to the English calendar. The story is told that a little Jewish maiden from Kensington was untying the presents from the Christmas tree when she turned sweetly round to her parents to ask them if the Christians also celebrated Christmas. But I cannot imagine a little maiden in the procession at Ain Charod asking whether the children of the Arab sheikhs or the Scottish gendarmes also carry citrons and palms in the procession of the Feast of Weeks. Upon the night of Simchath Torah, the Rejoicing of the Law, the lads and maidens went out from the colony to the grotto. Some held the traditional palms in their hands, others held empty pitchers with candles in them, as Gideon bade his three hundred to do on that memorable night when he roused the Midianites in this place. And then they broke the pitchers and lit a bonfire with the candles and cried out the ancient cry: 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'

A memorable night it was, and the hills of Gilboa gave back the cry again. But this later night as we followed the course of the stream coming down from the grotto, we heard no noise at all but the water whispering and the branches of the eucalyptus shaking in the misty moonlight. And it was only when we sat down by the small bridge which leads over into the deeper wood, that we became aware that a third sound

was added to these, where a group of young people were gathered together in a small clearing beyond the bank. The moonlight striking through the branches diapered them curiously with light and shade, and they looked more like a flat abstract pattern than a living group. It took some moments to resolve them into a company of young men in black blouses and girls in white frocks gathered about the knees of an older man, whose voice, likewise, did not immediately detach itself from the consonance of leaves and water. He spoke unhurriedly like those, and in Hebrew. Only slowly the drift of his exposition became clear to our friend from Galicia, who thereon whispered to me what its burden was. He was expounding the Republic of Plato, the correct meaning of justice and injustice, and their reference to practical living not merely in the ideal state of Socrates, but in a community, for instance, like this of Ain Charod.

I do not recall many experiences so beautiful as that group and that moonlit moment, nor any so pregnant with philosophy. It seemed to me that those young folk had transcended both Plato and Lenin; they had tempered the feverish Russian empiricism into a Greek graciousness. They had condensed the mists of Platonic idealism into a concrete and living organism. They were a thousand years ahead of, and a thousand years behind, all contemporary politics. But as between Russia and Athens, they seemed to me nearer to Athens. Who else governed this sodality of theirs but their philosophers? It certainly was not he who had the brawniest arms, nor he who had most wealth, for none

of them had any wealth which did not belong to all. It was not an academic philosophy that ruled their destinies, but a natural wisdom. I could not but recall Plato's earlier symposium as I listened to that level voice in the clearing of the eucalyptus-wood. This was not Esdraelon but Piræus, whither Socrates had repaired for the festival, with Glaucon, his friend. There was talk of a further festival that same evening, and I could not determine whether the Jewish lads and girls were to carry pitchers with candles in them or the young Greeks were to race on horseback, handing their torches to each other.

"None the less," said Polemarchus, who was born in Prague, "we can go out and watch it after dinner, and many of the young men here will join our party and we shall talk."

So Socrates stayed, and the young people gathered about him. "And what do you consider," asked Socrates, "to be the greatest advantage in the possession of riches?" For they have no possessions in Ain Charod, and they do not seem unhappy on that account. And Socrates himself, who was born in Ekaterinoslav, took up the reply. And the language he spoke in was not Greek, but Hebrew, that evening of misty moonlight by Gideon's stream in Esdraelon.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SAMARITAN DOOM

WHEN I awoke in the clear dawn of the colony of Ain Charod in Esdraelon, the clarity did not endure long. It was a brief crystal period between the *khamsin* of the night-time and the *khamsin* of the day-time, separated by a sharp thrust of sea-air that had made the epic journey along the valley of Armageddon. It had rustled the woods of Carmel upon the one hand and upon the other cooled hot brows in Nazareth. Here in Ain Charod I recreated in that illusive translucency the physical incidents of the preceding hours, with a vividness of detail with which the memory as a rule only invests a few transcendent episodes of childhood. As these incidents actually transpired the light that bathed them seemed so grandiose, so much more than earthly that I was aware of them only as spiritual, as almost incarnate, adventures.

They were not adventures, I hasten to add, in the sense that nomad Bedouins from Transjordania suddenly assaulted our car in the Ravine of Robbers or that our back axle broke and the petrol-tank took fire. There was no melodrama in them. Merely to enter the green defile of Nablus between the humps of Ebal and Gerizim and to hear water flinging so extravagantly down its channels was adventure enough. I perceived,

at this later hour, the reason for that tingle of excitement with which the senses, a day ago, had found themselves thus assailed. Greenness was an experience to me as violent as it is to the immemorial dwellers in these countries. To the westerner grass is the order of things. He goes forth upon long journeys equipped with all manner of strange garments and tinned food to find a remote place of rocks where grass ceases. There he sits down and makes holiday. But for my part, here in the green rift of Nablus, I twitched to the sight of grass and trees, as those wanderers must who have immemorially looked down towards Palestine from Moab and Gilead, those wanderers to whom sterility is the natural order of earth. They do not complain of it. It is not in their minds to conceive the world as a green place, excepting astonishingly, in sudden oases. The few square miles of the gardens of Damascus are for that reason as fabulous as the moon for him, whilst the puzzled westerner recalls that he might store them away in the angle of his own smallest county. I heard water and saw greenness, as we descended towards Shechem. I divined the emotion of our fathers, sun-scarred and frost-scarred, when they beheld a land which in those antique days was all sea-bordered greenness. The grass went to their heads like wine. So leaving Moses behind them, they marched forward with Joshua and fought and conquered and fought again and were beaten. And they fight again now, and there is fighting still to be done.

We sat down in an Arab café overlooking the tops



of trees and the horns of goats, and ordered water. Of this water Abraham had drunk ; the flocks of Jacob had grazed in the fields we looked down on. And the place was no more a place of the Jews now than then when the Canaanite lived in the land. One out of their company took from an ark an idolatrous mechanism and placed a disc of black wax upon it and allowed the same to rotate under a needle. Whereupon a noise issued from a large metal mouth like unto Moloch's, and the Canaanites inclined their heads and swayed their heads in time with the barbarous rhythm of that noise. They even lifted their mouths from the amber mouthpieces of the *narghiles* which were planted beside the benches, under their coiled feet. And one of them had a sort of rosary between his hands, having no *narghile* in his mouth ; twenty-nine beads were strung upon this rosary, indicating the attributes of his god, or the prophet of his god (as I believe). He ceased the regular passing of the beads between his fingers, an occupation to which he devoted most of the twenty-four hours, and shook his head too in the rhythm of that *djinn* speaking from a metal mouth. These were not a wicked race of Canaanites, for they had a series of framed texts over their heads, worked out in crystal and rose ; and these texts were so improving that Abraham himself (who doubtless studied them before our time) may have eked out a theology which was somewhat rudimentary, perhaps, in his Mesopotamian days. " Everything is in the power of Allah," it was stated, and " Whatever good we have is all from Allah." We followed the good cold water with tea,

and this had lemon in it ; and then, as we sat admiring those sentiments, a young Canaanite arose and asked us was it our desire to visit the Samaritans.

Indeed it was ; for these were a race not so old as the Canaanites, but our own persistent rivals once, opposing Mount Gerizim to Mount Zion ; and it was our desire to see what sort of people they were, having remained in Canaan all these years, instead of making pilgrimages, forced and voluntary, between Vladivostok and Cadiz, Archangel and Otaheite. So we made our way into that venerable town, passing under low arches and through sleepy bazaars. Festoons of garlic were suspended over us. Clusters of red shoes hung from cross-beams like large pods of pepper. There was such an air of eld about the dusky courtyards we looked into that they seemed older than Nablus, which is a mere parvenu name, and to be the reliëfs of Shechem though catastrophes so frequent and violent have sought to expunge it from human record. For it was in so late a day as Vespasian's that, in the place of Shechem, the city of Neapolis (by the Arabs muted into Nablus) was to be set up. An older city was this that framed our entry with hanging festoons of garlic.

Suddenly in the darkness and tortuousness of the upper city (for we seemed to have climbed somewhat) the young Canaanite announced the place of the Samaritans. I do not propose here to deliver an academic homily upon the ancient origins and present conditions of these people. I wish no more than to record my sentiment that these people must be as perfect an image as we can present to our imagination of our ancestors

in Palestine. They are descendants, on the one hand, of the colonists sent down from Assyria in the ninth century before Christ to take the place of the Israelites carried away thither, and, on the other, of the defaulting Jews who from time to time in subsequent Samaritan history came down from Jerusalem to throw in their lot with these persistent malcontents. Their fusion became in course of time as complete as the fusion of the Jews who came from Egypt with the elements which adhered to them in Sinai and were later incorporated by them in Canaan. At this day the blood in the veins of this handful of Samaritans must be purer than any in the world. They have been isolated, like the islanders of Djerba, in almost chemical seclusion; for neither Jews nor Muslims have permitted themselves, or been permitted, to mix their blood with theirs, much less any non-Semitic inhabitants of the country. They have clung to the barren summit of Mount Gerizim, where the rival temple to Jerusalem was once set up, with more tenacity than the Jews to Zion; for the utmost privilege of the Jews has been during many centuries to wail over the crannies in an exterior wall, whilst no man can say whether there was a time when the Samaritans remitted the sacrifice of sheep at Passover on the summit of Gerizim. If the Gentile desires to present his mind with the ideal Jew, it is precisely a Samaritan he builds up, for he gives up all patience with the task of striking an average amongst the Jews he has met with curved and snub noses, golden and black hair, lank and frizzy hair, lips thin as razors and thick as thumbs. The Samaritans are pre-

cisely the people the Jews had been had history passed them by. The Jews, too, by this time had not numbered two hundred souls. And all the wit of Heine, the glamour of Disraeli, the vision of Einstein, would have been bats nestling in the beard of another Isaac, petty rival to Isaac of Nablus, as magnificent and as empty as he, squatting over a *narghile* in some dungeon-like courtyard under the ramparts of Jerusalem, as the Samaritan Isaac squats over his *narghile* in the cooped ghetto of Nablus.

It seemed to me that, in the physical aspect, the Samaritans completely routed every axiom of racial hygiene and eugenics. They should have been wizened and etiolated, cretinous, squint-eyed, rachitic, for surely no other race so intensively in-bred has ever existed before. But their children, all but one small boy, bellowed lustily as bull-frogs, more particularly the female children, who seemed to realise how much rarer than the males they are and what a certain investment in gold piastres they are for their parents. The women held themselves like trees, and were distressingly handsome. I remember one of them, a niece of the High Priest, who had defiantly blue eyes, overshadowed by long pitch-black lashes, set in a face of healthy peach-bloom. She might have been the daughter of a hunting squire. But it was Isaac himself, son of Jacob, who incarnated the eugenistic paradox. He was as magnificent as any patriarch out of Michelangelo. I could not conceive Moses himself having a more awful presence. And it seems to me that should a body of Jewish monarchists arise in Palestine to



counterbalance the extreme leftness of the left wing among certain of the colonists, they could not elect a more imposing figure-head to that dignity.

But it is no more than figure-head that he might be. He is a shell, the merest hollow skin of majesty. So are they all. So should we have been, had Titus spared us. Splendidly he soared in his robe of yellow silk, striped with blue. A red turban was bound about his tarbouche, a blue tassel hanging from it. It was in the vestibule we came upon him, beside the synagogue. An old Arab woman was on her knee before him, having come to ask his blessing. She looked round furtively when we entered, for fear lest one of her own people had discovered her in this disloyalty to her own Prophet. To this meanness had the stubborn strength of Samaria declined, that an Arab hag, with henna-dyed hair, bowed down before it as to a twopenny tin god. A pious tablet in the Samaritan script was let into the wall, and near it an Arab text, in gold and black lettering, prayed that "Every bad thing should disappear." I would not deny that this same imposing High Priest is a scholar. He has written profound books, and studies profounder ones. The Arab lady had apparently demanded some medical advice as well as a spiritual blessing, for the priest had two volumes of Galen beside him, in the Arabic. Striped rugs, not too clean, lay about on low wooden benches under the double vaulting of the chamber.

By now his descendants, direct and collateral, were gathered around us, secondary and tertiary magnificences. The priestly family neither shaves nor cuts its



hair. The beards of quite young men lie grandly upon their bosoms. Their enormous plaits of inky hair are folded inside their tarbouches. We repaired now into the synagogue, where out of a miserable ark they drew that manuscript of the Pentateuch, which they declare to be the manuscript of Aaron, dating from the thirteenth year after the death of Moses. Three brass domes, punctuated with pinnacles, rose from the metal hinged case in which the Torah reposed. The model of a tabernacle was worked out upon it in a damascene of silver and gold. There was an air of eld, but not of beauty, about the synagogue, saving for this metal Torah case and four hanging wrought-iron lamps, sent by some philanthropist from Cairo. The rest was squalor and dust, as if the immemorial stubbornness of Samaria were at length exhausting itself, and the Samaritans raised no protest to see their synagogue empty as a charnel-house. Upon a ledge in the hinder section of the place reposed a great tumble of canvas. It emphasised for me my sepulchral fancy, for I thought it might be the bier upon which they carried out their dead. It was, however, the tent under which they camp out during the Passover, on the windy summit of Gerizim, where once the temple that challenged Jerusalem flaunted its doomed banners.

“Here,” proudly declares Jacob, son of Aaron, in the “Book of Enlightenment,” published for him by the Puritan Press of Sublette, Illinois—“Here the custom has not varied from ancient times until the present that only sheep, and none else, shall be used for sacrifices. In our days it has been agreed to choose only the

sheep of white colour. . . . Every Israelite must be taxed according to his share with the cost of those sacrifices. . . .”

“Every Israelite,” it will be observed. They speak of themselves, and with perfect propriety, as Israelites. Precisely in this manner the Woman of Samaria in her colloquy with Christ at the well not far from here insisted on her *father* Jacob. They ignore the pagan colonists of their origins as the Jews ignore the desert nomads who clung to them in Sinai and the indigenous idolaters whom they absorbed in Canaan and whatever wild tribes of Chazars flung aside their Mongol fetishes for Jehovah’s sake in the dark latter centuries of the first Christian millennium. And as I read these words in the “Book of Enlightenment” which had been placed in my hands, a voice curiously harsh and lifeless raised itself in incantation a few inches below my ear. I looked down, and saw the grandson, or surely it was the great-grandson, of the High Priest, with a Pentateuch in his hand. The other children bellowed, this one croaked. He was reading aloud from the Pentateuch with the precise automatism of a doll. I could not but be reminded of that gramophone I had been listening to not long ago in the Arab café, for there was just such a suggestion of husky mechanism in the child’s voice. At last, at last, after two and a half thousand years, the mechanism was worn out. The death of the Samaritans, our kinsmen, was eloquent in that voice. The child seemed, in some curious cadaverous manner, more ancient than his grand-uncles and his great-grandfather. Excepting that he had no beard, he was a waxen

replica of them, with his long skirts and thick lips and the black snake-like plaits, tied up against the crown of his head. So is the image of the beardless Buddha older than any patriarch bearded like a pine-forest. As the tiny dead voice droned on, certain voices of children not older than this Samaritan child, arose and protested. Small boys in synagogues upon dark evenings, small Jewish lads in a thousand scattered synagogues, read forth each his own chapter from the same Book. And in the voice of one was an urgent and desperate fervour, and in the voice of another was revolt no less desperate, but always the voices were clamant with life, like streams among mountains, like thoroughfares in cities.

Till at length the small child of Nablus suspended his reading and the Book was put aside, in the manner that the gramophone-record was put aside among the pipe-lengths of the *narghiles* in the Arab café below. It was at this moment that Jacob, a nephew of the High Priest, began to isolate himself from that strange company. Very tall is Jacob, but so are all the Samaritans, the tallest of surviving races in Syria. He is thin as a birch-tree. He has weak, small hands, there is something wistful and forlorn about him. His kinsmen are preoccupied with the struggle of keeping themselves alive, and most industriously do they ply the stranger with the books and charts and amulets they have to sell. Jacob seems to realise the futility of it. He stands apart in his leanness and forlornness, with his thick lips and his childlike inefficient hands. And of a sudden he set up a reedy clamour. Was there

no way to be found of taking him away from Nablus ? He would do this thing or that thing, he would be our servant, to do any menial service, could he but return with us to England, could he but enter into the Diaspora which passed over his head two thousand years ago.

Alas, Jacob of the Samaritans, it is too late ! You cannot join our wanderings now, least of all when now is our time for the end of wanderings. Not long now will you endure in the place of your fathers. Doom is upon your race, almost extinguished now. But in this time of the Jews returning to their land and yours they would do well to contemplate you. You have much to teach them. Bid them make certain that no such petrification of the spirit as yours befall them, that all Jewish Palestine become at length a Nablus, where a hundred ultimate Jews in some unimaginable ultimate ghetto peddle a few pamphlets and daubs among the cobwebs of the last synagogue. Meeter it were, lest this thing should happen, that, themselves their own Romans, they should with their own bombs demolish the foundations of the Temple now to be rebuilt, and that they should of their own will take in hand the pilgrim's staff and scrip and set forth into Diaspora again, into the last fringes of the world.



CHAPTER XI  
ARMAGEDDON CALLED EMEK

I

THE clarity of earliest morning did not endure long. The mood of symbolic urgency returned, with the awakening of that tawny lion, the *khamsin*, breathing fire and cloud through his brass nostrils. The Arab labourers, who sat down to breakfast with us in the chamber of such vast tea-pots, were something more than themselves. At the same moment as I perceived them with some exactness as having such-and-such eyes or wearing so many camel-hair ropes upon their head-cloths, I was aware that, in the nature of the case, these Arabs and these Jews met as equals, for in the communal groups hired labour is entirely forbidden, and only he eats who works. They cried out "Shalom" as they entered. And "Shalom!" came back to them heartily. They were friends and equals. In that moment I perceived how fatuous was the picture painted by those enemies of the mandate, in which an Arab peasant is seen grovelling on the soil with the foot of a Jewish bureaucrat on his neck.

"Pass the sugar, Isak!" said an Arab peasant in Hebrew.

"Leave some for me, Abdullah!" replied a Jewish peasant in Arabic.



I saw the Arabs again in the compound over against the cow-shed where a great black bull from Damascus was chained. It did not need the *khamsin* to see this creature in terms of legendary awe. So the Arabs certainly regarded it. The clamping upon its silky flanks of a pair of Assyrian wings could not have made it more fabulous. Not Henri de Montherlant, the Mithraist and prime ecstasiast of tauromachy, author of that superb book of bulls, "*Les Bestiaires*," could have abased himself more completely before the spectacle. But whereas in the Frenchman's mind the bull would have died a thousand deaths, each a more complex parade of pike-sticking, goad-sticking, and sword-thrusting—before the bemused eyes of the Arabs and the Jews who stood by them, the bull lived a thousand lives. His wives were almost as numerous as his offspring, and every land of pastures sent them forth to him. Slowly, their horns wreathed with flowers, they advanced to the nuptials out of the wet meadows of Holland and Tirol and England. The bells of the cows of Andalusia acclaimed the emperor. He flicked his tail in the compound at Ain Charod. The cows in the ranches of Arizona fell upon their knees.

The colossal incubator they are so proud of at Ain Charod was not so exciting. I could conceive the bull from Damascus being rendered a hundred years hence on a great Mithraic bas-relief like the Capitoline masterpiece in the Louvre. Heads of wheat spring once more from the bull's tail, but the later Mithras does not plunge his knife into the beast's throat. He on the

contrary surrounds it with carved branches of flowering oleander. It is certain that to render an incubator, incubating five thousand eggs, into a frieze, would daunt the most pertinacious sculptor. However, the colonists do not regard their incubator from that point of view, and I do not reproach them for it.

The black bull, the incubator, and a pepper-tree were my chief memories of the colony of Ain Charod. The pepper-tree stood by the edge of a sand-pit, which swarmed with romping children like an ant-hill with ants. One of these children had withdrawn himself from the community and climbed precariously to the top of the pepper-tree. There he sat swaying in a forked branch, solemnly tearing off leaves and blowing them out upon the wind.

"Hello!" cried my companion.

"I'm not a hello!" a skyey voice replied. But the small fingers went on pertinaciously tearing off leaves and blowing them into the air.

"Why are you climbing to the sky?" I cried in English.

He gave no reply.

"Why are you climbing to the sky?" I repeated in German.

There was silence, except for a "Puff!" and another "Puff!" Then the tiny voice cried out severely:

"Tell him to talk Hebrew!"

I blushed. My companion repeated my question in Hebrew.

"Why are you climbing to the sky?"

"Puff!" said the child, blowing out a leaf on to

the air. It fluttered down to my feet. "I'm making lots of trees grow!"

It seemed to me that though this method was unscientific the spirit augured as substantial a hope for the future of Palestine as the black bull from Damascus and the incubator that incubates five thousand eggs.

## II

The day that followed was a day of conflict between Armageddon and Emek. These are the names of one and the same place, this great plain that thrusts south-eastward from Haifa towards Jezreel and the Jordan valley. When the mind yielded to *khamsin* and beheld the plain as one entity unified in the sultry enormous light, it was Armageddon, the theatre of wars, waiting breathlessly for the clash of armies. The swirls of dust in the rocky basins of Galilee were the plumes of Assyria marching. Deploying northward from the plain of Sharon the Pharaoh Necho advanced, and Napoleon.

But when the mind tore aside those ponderous curtains, the Emek stood forth with all its gallantry of colonies. The Emek is the principal seat of post-mandate agricultural activities. It had earlier exerted no great appeal upon Jewish settlers, who concentrated in the country behind Jaffa. The reason for this was something more than its remoteness from other areas of Jewish interest or the dangerous insecurity that prevailed there. It was the fact that the task which it inspired was too colossal to be undertaken by any energy which had not precisely the sanctions under

which the Emek has developed so astonishingly during these last few years. Until the energies of all that body of Jewry favourable to the Homeland in Palestine were concentrated upon it, with all the authority of the mandatory power to buttress it, the task was hopeless.

I do not propose, however, to rehearse that development here, or describe its present aspect. That duty is best performed, and has been performed, by exacter pens than mine. I do no more than describe the Palestine which I saw with my own eyes, always with such emotion, often of pride, sometimes of apprehension.

And of that first day in Emek I can only say that the desert so scorched from without and my emotion so burned within that in the resulting glow the points of the compass became fused, and north became west, and south north. I can take down a map of the Emek and under my eye the Girls' Agricultural College clicks back into place again at Nahalal below Nazareth, ousted from the hump of Jezreel which it occupies in my memory. Jordan and Kishon disentangle their courses. Mount Tabor takes wings from Samaria and settles again among the hills of Galilee, where the primal buckling of the earth established it. And in the readjustment the colonies define themselves, spreading out their hutments, their fields of grain and young plantations, about some group or individual which has condensed the colonies for me into some single manageable type. I find myself at the *chassidic* settlement of Nahlat Jacob, which springs to my mind first in my recollection of that day in the Emek, even though it is the farthest removed in space from the



colony of Ain Charod, where the day started. And though I find it admirable enough that there should be groups of *Chalutzim*, of young pioneers, in such establishments as Ain Charod (which I have already described) or Tel Josef, where they celebrate the memory of the hero, Joseph Trumpeldor (of whom I shall speak later)—I find most miraculous the old *Chassidim* with their ear-locks, stooping over their shovels. These *Chassidim* are a group of middle-aged and elderly men, of uncompromising piety, who brought over their families from Poland in 1924 and 1925 under the leadership of their rabbi, who has great fame both in Palestine and Poland as the Rabbi of Jablona. They belong to the type of which the utmost ambition not many years ago was to die in Palestine, or to indulge in a long trance of study, an occupation which seems by comparison with their present business a protracted dying. Their ambition now is much more than to die, or even to live, in Palestine: it is to work, to trace out in stubborn soil the characters of a new Torah.

And being at one moment in Nahlat Jacob, I find myself the next moment half-way towards Jordan again, in the small township called Afuleh, which bids fair in the course of a decade or two to be the main emporium for the whole valley. It is a curious pre-natal sort of place, planting its boulevards before the foundations are laid of the shops and houses which will line it. Here and there stood the skeleton of some large building. Here and there a strip of road was in process of construction. A freckled Jewish girl sat





“THEIR AMBITION NOW IS MUCH MORE THAN TO DIE,  
OR EVEN TO LIVE, IN PALESTINE”



VINEYARD IN ESDRAELON

Plate VII.



upon a heap of stones, breaking them into small fragments. She sang some Hebrew ditty of silk and spices. A group of fellaheen discoursed gravely in the sparse shadow of a young tree. "Shalom!" they called out, as we passed. "Shalom!" we replied. There was no air of internecine Arab-Jewish conflict in the less-than-half-born town of Afuleh, which stands midway in Esdraelon under Nazareth. Silks and spices, sang the girl stone-breaker merrily. She seemed to wear no less queenly than trailing silks the coarse smock that came down to her knee.

Sturdy legs they were, but they were match-stalks compared with the legs of the girls in the village of Kfar Yeladim. This is a colony of two hundred and fifty acres almost entirely run by youngsters—orphans, chiefly, of the pogroms in Ukraine. The legs of the girls of Kfar Yeladim were sturdy enough, it seemed to me, to support the whole tottering weight of Jewry.

They showed me a synagogue there, which is used as a play-house upon occasion, in the salutary manner of the mediæval moralities, which were performed in churches. Was it in the children's village, or was it elsewhere, that I saw the synagogue of the mediæval moralities? I remember only those brown and sturdy legs, treading naked on thorns and thistles as if they were a carpet of lush grass. The thorns will be grass, soon enough, I doubt not.

We have moved farther north or south, I cannot recollect. This is the colony of Merhavia, the first to be founded in the Emek. A company of boy scouts is digging up a football pitch. A small girl with blonde

hair and a pink bow is practising to herself the mysterious steps of a dance she has invented. Forward, backward, in and out. In again, round. But her mother in a small wooden hutment is pale and thin with hard work and scanty commons. There are no luxuries in the two-roomed hut. There are a few broken chairs, a rickety table, a bed. And there are flies. The small girl's mother has strength enough to make food for her man and her child, but just not strength enough to keep the flies away.

But it was worse in the day of the child's grandmother. Prowling Bedouins were the enemy then. The child's uncle went out towards Haifa on a horse which belonged to the colony. He was met by a group of Arabs in broad noon and stripped. The horse, also, of course, was taken from him. Naked and barefoot they sent him back to the colony again. So eaten was he with horse-flies that he streamed with blood like a Neapolitan Christ. And not long later, his mother died of yellow fever, having come over from Glasgow not many years earlier, where she would not have died that death at least, and so untimely.

There is progress, therefore. That lady's daughter is managing to carry on, though she is pale and the skin is tight upon her cheek-bones. And that lady's daughter's daughter has blonde hair with a pink bow and dances her mysterious dance in the sunlight, forward, backward, in and out.

Now Merhavia is not merely a co-operative group such as I have described earlier. A part of its territory constitutes a *moshav*, as they term it, which they

thus succinctly define: "a small-holder's settlement whose members are united in an association under strict rules which preclude the use of hired labour, and which provide for a high degree of co-operation in buying, selling, and in the conduct of the village affairs." The child's father was a small-holder then. He had a plot of his own, and I wondered with what success he worked it.

"What sort of a living do you make?" I asked him.

He turned blue and thoughtful eyes upon me, contemplating both me and my question dispassionately for a few moments. The question had not occurred to him before so explicitly, though his father had worked the small-holding before him, and he had worked it for a number of years.

"I live," he said. "What more do I want? I am not a business-man."

His words were few and simple, but they seemed to me of such nobility that all the Big Business of the Jews, from Hamburg to San Francisco, might bow its head. The child profoundly corroborated it, dancing right, dancing left, in a slanting sunbeam.

I said good-bye to the father who was no business-man. The slow eyes again rested on mine for a moment, and he gave me such a hand-grip that I feel it now, when the wind blows from the south and east.

And now I was in Hagivah, the settlement on the hill-top, and they were pouring out tea for me, and I sorely needed it. And myriads of eggs were set upon plates, and these were flanked by two tea-pots not so



large as ship's boilers or the tea-pots of Ain Charod, but slightly more elegant than either. Here also were the only fly-papers in Esdraelon, and under the bounty of these, with such a wealth of eggs and tea before me, I entered into a condition of tranquil debate with myself. With whom should I liken these colonists of Palestine, attempting so gallantly their experiments in the relations of humans with earth, of parents with children, of wives with husbands, of males with females? Were they a purged rendering of feudalism, a polity of serfs without a lord, or better still, of lords without a serf? And where might you place them theologically? Were they the anchorites of a more glorious Thebaid? Were they the fakirs of a more creditable magic, they who waved their wands (though the process is more strenuous than that) and boulders give forth grapes and sand gives forth oranges? Were they the expositors of a more pellucid oracle?

The truth was that the eating of many eggs and the drinking of much tea, added to the blowing of hot sand and the bumping over no roads, had loosened my wits from my flaccid body, so that I was bidden enter a certain cool, clean hut, where there was a bed, and on the bed was a sheet that smelled of lavender. The lady who knew, alone of all the colonists in Palestine, how sheets and lavender are inseparable complements, like the voice and the lute, like lover and the beloved, sent forth her sanction from the cow-shed, where she was scrubbing the floor with a pail of foul water. I went over to her hut lightly, treading on air, seeming to leave my body behind me in the dining-hut

shovelling eggs mechanically into itself and emptying innumerable beakers of tea.

I slept for some time in an odour of lavender, till I opened my eyes on Raphael's Virgin embracing her wide-eyed Child over the foot of my bed. So it was that this lady who had cool sheets in the baked colony, consoled herself for the hours she might not spend with her own child. Behind my head was a cosy Dutch interior of Van Hoogh. So it was she consoled herself for the rose-bowls she did not fill with pot-pourri, and the harpsichord her fingers did not glide over, and the tapestries she might not embroider and the rare dishes she might not make. She was a lady born for all delicacy, but she had a fiercer sort of happiness in the cow-shed beyond the tank, where she broke the bristles of the hard scrubbing-brush on a clot of hard muck. Yet she remembered wistfully. She plucked the stalks of lavender for her bed-sheets. She framed in cheap frames the mild beauty of Raphael's Jesus, an earlier Palestinian baby, and sat and gazed at the shining tiles in Van Hoogh's floor.

This day in the Emek was a notable day, in truth, wherein the pages of the new Talmud were opened before my eyes. Now this is a region still for the most part barren, but the air was charged in all directions with a sense of increase and fecundity. And in one of the colonies towards Beisan an old man had died in the morning and was being buried that same evening. They bore the coffin over towards the cemetery in the rocky fold between two hillocks. And, strangely enough, the procession and the death seemed rather to

emphasise for me the sense of the fertility of Esdraelon. For the mourning women who stayed behind, and the mourning men who accompanied the dead, were not grotesque with the hysteria of their grief, as I have seen the bereaved Jews in European cities. There was a dignity and restraint about them, as if they were aware that this was a continuing tale, and that for one old mouth that ceased to utter it, a dozen young and jubilant mouths were waiting to take it up. Everywhere was the bourgeoning of youth, young trees, young beasts, young children. There was fertility enough in the pale out of which the elders had issued, but that was the proliferation of a vegetation fallow with the damps of cellars and graveyards. Birth there was not joyous; how could death there have dignity? Here death was an episode in the rhythm of recurrences. The wheat-fields waved in the wind, the wheat was cut down and harvested, there would be sowing again and reaping. There was no death.

But my last memory of the colonies of the Emek was not of an old man being buried but of a small boy being born. This happened—but I am not certain—in the last colony we visited before we came to the end of Esdraelon in the ancient city of Beisan, whence you look down upon the Jordan valley and enter a new world. It may have been the colony of Beth Alfa, which has been manned by young men from the ghettos of Galicia. The small boy I am speaking of had come over from those dark regions, I was informed, quite recently. The ghetto was still in his eyes. Or I should say that one moment it was there and two moments

later it was not. In the moment between the boy had been born again. I saw him ambling idly among the tall heads of flowers in one of the colony gardens. He seemed paler than the rest, dispirited. The Palestine sun had not scorched its way through the stubborn crusts of three ghetto centuries. And of a sudden the sun, as it seemed, made a great sideward plunge in the west, shouldering aside the blankets of haze that had obscured him. The light thrust forward like a battery of swords and transfixed a coppery tiger-lily. The flower blazed. It blazed in the garden there so fiercely among the other flowers, that it seemed to give off smoke. The child whipped round as if the heat of it had puffed against his cheek. He gazed at it, dumb and almost blinded. His cheeks were pale. His jaw dropped. Then suddenly he filled his lungs with air and emptied them with so joyous and startling a yell as I have never heard before. The child had never yet seen a flower, so dull his eyes were. Now in a moment there was nothing between earth and sun but a single flower. The walls of the Galician ghetto crumbled like Jericho in the sound of the trumpet of the tiger-lily.

I, too, heard that trumpet pealing, where I stood. I doubt if ever again I shall lose that music out of my ears.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE HOSTILE CITY

FORTH we went from Esdraelon to Beisan, that old town. Here dwell certain Jews of the old dispensation as there the Jews of the new. There is a curious unease in the air, for the Jewish traveller most of all. And this is strange, for it might be said of Beisan that it is the eastern rampart of the Emek, the Jewish valley. But you would not relate these hostile greybeards with those lusty lads with whom you have lately broken bread in Balfouria or Hagivah. Nature is more friendly than man in Beisan.

Four streams feed the gardens of carob and fig-trees that surround the town, even as four streams surrounded Eden. It was in fact proclaimed by the Rabbi Simon ben Lakish that "if Paradise is to be found in Palestine, its gate is Beisan." But you are not likely to share his enthusiasm. At no time a city friendly to the Jews, you will soon enough discover that as a consequence the Jews there are not friendly. Always an air of peril has lurked for the Jews of Beisan in the narrow alleys, and lorded it from the ruined citadel. That must be why the Jews who live here have sought to avert the dangers that threatened them by a piety that drew words of praise long ago from the Talmudist. That is why, even to-day, its handful of Jews are more dour



and rigid than their brethren in Hebron and Safed, though these places have all the awe of an ancient Jewish culture behind them. The memory of an old treachery hardly seems to have departed from the consciousness of these Jews; for when their rebel brothers in the Roman wars attacked this city, they helped their pagan masters to withstand them, a gallant proceeding, but not from every point of view commendable. For which their reward was that their whole number, thirteen thousand souls, were driven into the groves among the four streams, and there butchered. There are fewer Jews there to-day. Seventeen, decides the Father Barnabas Masterman. Forty families, pronounced my friend Salem Mizrachi, who has a shop in Beisan, where he will sell you slippers of red leather and camel-bells to make wistful music on suburban evenings. Perhaps it was because he was born in Bagdad, that likelier Eden, that he seemed less apprehensive than I expected a Jew to be in that Canaanitish city. That also was the reason, I take it, why he was the sole Jew in Beisan who smiled. The others frowned. One spat. Here, where the head of Saul was nailed up in the temple of Ashtaroath, here, opposite that clearing where Saul's body swung on the wall and the daws pecked at it, Salem Mizrachi from Bagdad sells his scarlet slippers. Beisan, like Nablus, is a focus of the Arab resentment, such as it is, against the mandate and the establishment of the Jewish Homeland. That does not prevent the Arab merchants who squat in their shops to the right and the left of the Jew, Mizrachi, from trafficking their leather-ware for

green stuffs brought down by the Jewish colonists from the Emek. It is the proximity of these, perhaps, that puts Mizrachi more or less at his ease. I should not be surprised if it is that same fact which helps to disgruntle the other Jews. They are not Jews who can conceive any return to Zion not heralded by a Messiah riding on a white horse. These minor Messiahs riding astride of steam-tractors must horrify them. And they speak Hebrew. That also is an impiety to these ancient ones. The Holy Language is degraded by being put to secular uses. That was why Mizrachi, who courteously bade us go with him to the synagogue, spoke Hebrew until we reached its portals, and then dropped fearfully into Arabic. The synagogue was thrust away into a tangle of mean alleys. Here the old men, much less at their ease than he, looked up doubtfully when the stranger entered. For strangers have entered there before, with no good intentions. They brought out a Scroll of the Law reluctantly from the Ark, but they would not unhinge it from its Mesopotamian brass casket until their kinsman assured them no injury was to be feared. I admired the scrupulous script for a time ; then they shut the hinges to, and placed it in its nest of bright silks from Bokhara, and returned to the low stone benches that were built up against the sides of the synagogue ; and in a niche in the wall, two wicks were burning in cheap oil-lamps. And the draught from the door as I opened it blew out the wicks, and the old men uttered a cry of dismay and looked at me resentfully and whispered together.

In the courtyard an old Jew smoked a *narghile*

and spat as I passed by. I assured myself that the tobacco was rancid. A number of single-roomed habitations abutted upon this courtyard, and each of them seemed to be occupied by the forty Jewish families stated by Salem Mizrachi to be the total Jewish population of Beisan. Small faces were clustered together at the windows like pulpy fruits on a bough. There was not a smile in all that moony orchard of faces. The old Jew with the *narghile* spat again. I was not quite so sure this time that he disliked the tobacco. I bade my friend take me out of Jewish Beisan, and out of Muslim Beisan, which is hardly more friendly, into the city of Scythopolis.

For the town had a Hellenistic interlude in its history, when its name was Scythopolis and was a member of the Greco-Roman confederation of cities called the Decapolis. I hoped something of the pagan graciousness might still linger under the broken vaults of bridges, and in the old hippodrome where the four streams united and the naked athletes fought mimic sea-wars. But the paganism of Pompey came at all too late a day to invest stone and earth with loveliness. In Beisan they remained stone and earth. Even the name the pagans gave to it dropped from the shattered temples into the dust. The surly city took on its old name again, the bodies of Saul and Jonathan swung again in the fetid noonday for the daws to peck.

CHAPTER XIII  
THE SACRED DIFFERENCES

THE journey down the plain of Esdraelon towards Gilboa and then down the valley of Jezreel towards Beisan, is a gradual dropping away from the light and clarity of the Mediterranean into the humidity of a strange sunken world, unlike any other on the earth's surface. Under the eye of the hollow citadel of Beisan, the land in one swoop forswears the Mediterranean, all the white islands in the violet seas, the odorous acres of rosemary and the tall tree-heath, and laughing girls and singing lads. The land collapses several hundreds of feet down towards the mop-haired jungle and the turbid river. This is Jordan. Beyond this there is no western world.

Precipitously we clattered down the stony road from Beisan through a tangled thicket which ceased suddenly. A moment later a dank loneliness stretched about us out of which the vapours rose at the end of the day. We thrust forward through whip-like grasses, festering with a yellow sedge. The river itself was invisible in the gorge to our right, but the mountains of Gilead beyond rose crimson like the reek of sacrifice on an altar. All the peaks dripped blood in the sunset—the blood of Tammuz of Babylon, the blood of Adonis of Syria. Thin streaks of the blood of Adonis wandered



in the lightless marshes at our right hand. The black Syrian maidens squatted under the camel-hair roofs of their crazy tents, and mourned for Adonis dead, whining like mosquitoes in the pestilent air. Fires of damp reeds flicked smokily in the shaggy swamps. A bird rose out of the tangle, a shining coal-black bird, with a loud report of wings. Higher he soared towards the bloody flanks of Gilead, and dropped like a stone into the viewless cleft of Jordan. To the right hand and the left the water seeped among bleached stalks. The fires ceased upon Gilead. The blood of Adonis flowed no longer. The lament of the flutes of Tammuz, that whined like mosquitoes, were heard no longer. The heavy dank night-air pulsed through the valley sluggishly, like blood in the pulse of the wrist.

On the left hand the blind wadys thrust down from the hills of Galilee, with no light in them, and no clean water to cozen the miasma away. The mud clots, which are the Arab dwellings of the village of Kobab-el-Hawa, Star of the Wind, lie squat on the sullen ridge. Here once the banners of the Christian chivalry floated from the castle of Belvoir, when Fulk of Jerusalem set up a vain house to stem the returning tide of the Muslim. The stars are dimmed now and the wind sags with pestilence. Farther along the valley another wady debouches into the chasm, till at length the traveller attains that sharp elbow of the Jordan where the new railway bridge and the ancient Jisr-el-Moujamia span the narrowed banks.

Here is a Jewish colony, a *kvutzah*, where we were to spend the night. How friendly an island it was



after this marish desolation ! The sound of Hebrew fell homelily upon the ear as if it had not heard all the world's languages but Hebrew during the last two thousand years. The sound of a cow mooing in its stall, the taste of her milk frothing in a tumbler, were richer music than the most silvery soprano of La Scala and the most fastidious vintage of Château Lafitte. The colony seemed to have a breeze all of its own, generated in the angle of Jordan below the hutments by the swiftly distorted water. In the topmost barracks the children were sleeping under their mosquito-nets. The hefty Latvian youths were gathered about the threshold of the dining-huts smoking contemplatively their ration of cigarettes. They talked and moved slowly, with dignity. I did not understand what the discussion was that awoke among the flaming tops of the cigarettes, some question of the transport of their hay. But I became aware of a difference in their deportment which was common to all the younger generation in Palestine, a difference which had till now eluded me. I realised here, in the colony of Jisr, that these people talked without gesture. They talked like English yeomen in the market towns of the Cotswolds.

English yeomen ? Do I deceive myself with a pretty parallel ? English ? And yeomen ? Because they are both much to be loved, and those others in Worcestershire plough fields and these by the Jordan plough fields ? But fields how different, and the ploughmen bring what different histories ! Is it enough that these Jews, having no energy for surplus movement,

talk without gesture, have thrown off febrility—is that enough to make Bill Hodge out of Izchak the son of Moisheh, a tailor from Lodz ?

I sat at the threshold of the dining-hut, revolving the thought, as they went on discussing in quiet voices this business of the hay. An insistent question began to pound at me, in an accent of thought, in an urgency of reiteration, which was alien, I realised, to my own unvigorous modes of meditation. I recalled who else, and so fiercely, was asking the question from me. One indeed, who of living thinkers, Jewish or Gentile, might almost alone be capable of answering it, or at most, one of a small company. D. H. Lawrence, I mean, with that simultaneous faculty he has of planning like a strong bird above his idea and plunging like a sword to its heart. The burning tips of the cigarettes combined themselves into a curious script, outlining words that I had not so much forgotten since first they were addressed to me in the Spring of 1921, but kept out of sight under a heap of fancy stones, which I erected now into the Treasury of the Athenians at Delphi, now into the Mosque of the Swords at Kairouan.

“What is there at the bottom of the soul of a Jew which makes him a Jew ?”

(That haggard lady at Jisr who is nearly dead of malaria could tell him. And she is a lady ploughman from Stow-on-the-Wold ? Go to ! The milky mist of moonlight and Jordan conceal the death which is upon her. But in the morning, when the relentless sun arises and gouges into the hollows under her eyes, you

will read, Mr Lawrence, what there is at the bottom of the soul of a Jew which makes him a Jew.)

“Is it nothing but a mechanical habit which is just collapsing?”

A mechanical habit? Oh, but think again! The defence of Masada a mechanical habit?—that monstrous fortress slung high over the awful chasm of the Dead Sea southward hence? In those last lonely days when Titus had conquered Jerusalem, and Eleazar, the defender of the fortress, spoke thus with doom upon him: “Since we long ago, my generous friends, resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God Himself, who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind, the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice.” And you remember the nature of that practice? How all those that were beleaguered there were to offer their enemy the satisfaction of not one single prisoner. So that every husband and father slew his wife and children and the chosen out of their number slew all that remained, and the last of these ten, “when he perceived that they were all slain, he set fire to the palace, and with the great force of his hand ran his sword entirely through himself and fell down dead near to his own people.”

A mechanical habit? Is there an episode in all history which required such titan willing? Or do I revert to the period before the Jewish habit became mechanical? Spain is not long ago, Russia is recent. But Palestine is your answer, I think, here in Jisr among the pestilences by the edge of Jordan.

“Is there”—the remembered script of Lawrence proceeded, picked out against the flanks of Gilead—“is there a basic consciousness of difference—radical difference between Jew and Gentile? Is there or isn’t there?”

(Is there not between the sons of the same father and mother? Is there not between lovers?)

“If there is, then it must be something important indeed. I feel there is a gulf; but always hidden and bridged over, or stated as if it were not a real thing, only a question of habit. I am tired of sympathy and universality. I prefer the sacred and ineradicable differences between men and races; the sacred gulfs. Yet even in Zionists I can’t really get at any gulf between me and them. They seem like one of us English doing a Zion stunt.”

(Yes, a stunt. In London and Basle and Geneva. Secretaries and portfolios and concession and commissions. Stuntish—but how, in the name of goodness, to dispense with them, save in a community of Ethiopians, who shall feed, like the troglodytes reported by Herodotus, “on serpents, lizards, and other similar reptiles”? Yet surely Jizr is no stunt? The black bread they feed on is no stunt? The malaria they die of is no stunt? My mind was clear enough on that point, though the air was murky with exhalations.)

Is it a metaphysical and mystical fiction, this sentiment of the sacred and ineradicable differences? Heaven knows I experienced it often enough in Palestine; that same evening, for instance, in Jizr-el-Moujamia. And by all the rules I should have felt my



solar plexuses, my navel, my ganglia—I do not know in what order, or whether simultaneously—throbbing in the rhythms of certain kindred navels and ganglia and plexuses I shortly encountered. I mean of the Arabs, my brothers in Abraham, who squat against the bridge-head among the Jewish pioneers. There are a dozen or so of Arab houses here, more stoutly built than usual, with thick walls and fine vaultings. They must have served as miniature fortresses from time to time against the Bedouins coming in from the sources of the Yarmuk, which discharges its abundant waters into the Jordan close at hand. They have outlived the mediæval castle, whose few stones still moulder here, on the lip of the baked bank. The Jews occupy a few of the Arab houses, in addition to the usual wooden barracks, until the colony is substantial enough to put up decent stone dwellings. They are clean; there is a faint smell of disinfectant in them, a stronger smell of flowers. The moon gleams in upon linen, threadbare but spotless. A branch of oleander blooms ghostlily out of an enamel jug in the deep window recess.

But as soon as you step beyond the threshold, the acrid smell of burning camel-dung strikes the nostrils, where the Arabs are crouched over their fires. I crossed a sort of no-man's-land of rubble and sliding beasts—frogs, lizards, probably a few serpents. The houses that the Arabs slunk into and out of, with the same fitful sliding noises as the frogs and lizards, were of the same type and date as those I had left. But they were so lightless, so unclean, that they seemed less like man-



made habitations than holes in rocks. They were cooking some unspeakable offal on the fires of camel-dung and twitch-wood. Their hands seemed splayed and horny, wholly insensitive to the simmering fat. A voice spoke at the threshold of one of the houses, a voice as much like gurgling water as human utterance. I learned that I was bidden enter. I sat down on a heap of blankets in a gloom as tangible. These people were hospitable at least. I felt an odour approaching me. It was some of the fried offal tendered me on a spit. But at that moment I felt a first stiletto between the shoulder-blades, followed at once by a thrust in the groin, a bite at the neck, a hurt at the heel, a stab at the thigh, all of such virulence as I have never experienced before, nor imagined that insects have it in their power to inflict. Not merely the flea was at me—in those categories ably defined by Kinglake; the smug, steady, importunate flea from Holywell Street, the pert jumping *puce* from hungry France, the wary, watchful *pulce* with his poisoned stiletto, the vengeful *pulga* of Castile with his ugly knife, the German *flob* with his knife and fork insatiate—not merely the smart flea was at me, but the sullen bug, the symphonic mosquito, the insidious sand-fly, and all as large as thrushes, and all as innumerable as bacilli. I did not wait to devour the fried offal. I begged to have myself excused. I hurled myself down the bank through thickets of tamarisk and oleander, tore off my clothes, and plunged into Jordan. I clung to Jordan for the rest of my stay in Jisr.

Now I would insist that this sentiment of sacred and ineradicable difference preceded the outrage to my

senses inflicted by the frying offal and the unspeakable insects. I was aware, when I crossed the no-man's-land beyond which their fires burned, that it was with the body only I crossed that chasm. I left all sense of ease and homeliness among the Jewish hutments. I left them bordered on the left hand by a lawn of green turf under the downs of Sussex, by Steyning. The cross-angled chimneys of an Elizabethan house hung over it. It was edged by a special small wilderness of English flowers I had myself been deputed to plant there an autumn ago—narcissus and jonquil and Solomon's seal and primrose and hyacinth and daffodil. On the right hand the Jewish hutments were bordered by a coloured Sicilian meadow, where marigold had hardly begun to outblaze the show of blue borage and purple comfrey. These things I left behind me, edging the place of the Jewish hutments. I crossed a tottering bridge over a chasm which four thousand years had hollowed.

Later I recalled that there were other Arabs with whom my people had marched abreast for a brilliant century or two in Africa and in Spain. They were the poets, the scholars, with whom, in my reverie upon Mount Scopus, I had dreamed that the Jewish poets and scholars might once more walk abreast. I could only say of these that, not less than myself, these Arabs of Tunis and Cordova would have felt themselves held aloof from these sad creatures of Jisr by differences not less sacred and ineradicable.

Yet I dislike to give the impression that I was not grateful for this well-intentioned hospitality at Jisr.

And I learned shortly that this was by no means the first interchange of courtesies between the Jews and the Arabs there. It is all to me a profound mystery, for these same offal-eating, bug-indifferent Arabs, who to me that evening had seemed more sacredly and ineradicably different than any Eskimo or Choctaw Indian, had been the honoured guests of the colony at the Passover Supper celebrated a month or two earlier. They had participated in the ceremonial with a childish solemnity, the washing of the hands, the bitter herbs dipped in salt water, the breaking of the round unleavened bread. The language in which it was all conducted had a phantasmal meaning for them, was a landscape dimly familiar to them, though viewed through a glass darkly. Ishmael and Isaac rubbed shoulders that night more friendlily than upon any occasion since that morning when Abraham rose early and "took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away ; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness." Ishmael and Isaac cheek by jowl ! I tried to discover if there was any consciousness upon either side of a gulf so sacred, of differences so ineradicable. There was none. It is all a mystery to me ; as it should be, in truth. And if I have the sentiment of closer kinship with Eskimos and Indians, it may be because I have divined that these races are some of the lost Israelite families. How shall it be proved that they are not ?

I stated that during the rest of my stay in Jisr I was hardly to be separated from the Jordan. The river

seemed in fact to exist upon two levels, to flow within its immediate banks concentratedly as water, and to drift heavily about as steam in the upper air. When I awoke next morning and crawled over to the river I was hardly more moist after I sprang in than before. Curious blunt-headed lizards stood motionless on the banks and glared down stonily. Storks fanned themselves down stream, their long legs tucked under them. But in the water itself a new type of organism made itself busy. I do not know whether they were reptiles or fish or amphibians, or if they were not those same insects which had so beset me in the Arab house. The air was as damp as the water, so it seemed possible that they were able to function in either element. The creatures did not bite or stab or punch or tear or chew. They behaved more objectionably. They tickled. It was possible to escape them, fortunately, in mid-stream. The current there was violent and dangerous, but a death by drowning seemed less humiliating than a death by titillation.

The day ended with water, but with such a profusion of water that it seemed then, and it seems now, to have been a sort of enchantment. The violent waters of the Yarmuk, as I have said, flow into the Jordan by Jisr, but not without protest do they submit to a doom so desperate. What self-respecting torrent can anticipate without anger the slow inglorious asphyxiation of the Dead Sea? So that some kilometres away from Jisr the Yarmuk flings itself down a shelf of rocks like a lion, and roars, and lashes its tail. Thither we walked over from the colony and lay down among bushes of myrtle



and smelled that cool water, and the odour was lovelier than distilled perfumes, and heard that loud water, and the music was more splendid than drums and trumpets. Such profligacy of water in such a land seemed a negation of the natural order. It would have seemed hardly more fantastic if it had hurled itself upward towards its own sources, or if the shrubs on the banks had waved their roots in the milky moonlit air. This is the lion of water which Rutenberg, the engineer, has the duty of taming. Here and there in this neighbourhood he had begun to spread his traps, sticks and wires, and other secret registers. How much a nobler destiny will it be, I fell to musing, that this naked potency shall be refined, exquisitely and mathematically, into electric energy—how much a nobler destiny than to swirl muddily through the Ghor towards the salty death of Sodom! Here at this place the first Jordan power-house is to be erected. It would not be less exalted a temple than any that had been set up in this region, in function or appearance, any synagogue or church or mosque. It would be an indispensable ante-chamber to all. I could not consider the overalls of the mechanics less priestly a garment than the breast-plates of the cohenim or the chasubles of the priests. Beyond the broken water I caught sight of the unbuilt power-house for one moment in a rift of the moony mist. Straight and erect it soared, a logical idea made manifest. The tall, lean, rectangular windows slit its height like the slashes of a sword. No classic pediments, no pretty gables, no baroquery—it was an architecture stern and sufficient, like the Hebrew characters. The slats of



light sloped on the shaved meadows, the shadows lay in black panels. In the arcana of the temple the wheels moaned and sang. Nothing withstood their revolution. A pencil-point of energy ticked and tacked into the cowering recesses of the Arab dwellings. The foul dead insects heaped themselves like a growing heap of grain on the stone flooring. The Jews and Arabs, linked to this central energy by cables like thongs, harnessed to it in the meadows their ploughs, their threshing-machines, in the cities their mills and factories. The water roared. The wheels moaned. The myrtle-bushes gave off their odours in the broken spray.

CHAPTER XIV  
THE OLIVE-TREE OF DEGANIEH

ONLY a few kilometres away from the bridge at Jisr-el-Moujamia, at the point where the Jordan issues from Lake Galilee, you come upon the colony called Deganieh, one of the happiest in Palestine. The Christian traveller, gazing upon its woodland and tilthland, its olive-groves and orchards, will here find it easier than elsewhere upon Galilee to recreate for his mind's eye the rich lakeside landscape where Christ wandered and discoursed with his fellows. The Jewish traveller will see in it a happy specimen of a reclaimed Homeland, of which the colonies in Esdraelon are lean foreshadowings. The economist will give the place his special attention, for Deganieh is the first *kvutzah*; and all the more interesting in that it gradually evolved that mode of settlement, instead of building itself upon those lines ideologically. The first observer will not improbably carry the impression away that no other community might be said so accurately to illustrate the Christ polity, as this company of men and women who have restored to greenness the ravaged soil of Christ's meadows.

As we approached the entrance into Deganieh, we observed two lads playing together in the shadow of its flanking eucalyptus woods, among the yellow worts

and the tall thistles. The nearer of them was an Arab lad, tending a small herd of black goats and white sheep.

"Shalom!" the Arab lad by the Jewish wood called out, his voice muffled by a long white vegetable stick he was chewing.

"Shalom!" we returned.

"Allah shall put his peace upon you!" the lad went on, and nibbled an inch off his pale stick.

"Shalom!" we cried out to the other small boy. He was preoccupied. With one hand he held the thistles that grew here rankly, and cut them off with another. He turned his face towards us. This was a Jewish lad. He wore a white blouse and white shorts, but no shoes and no hat. The burning earth did not seem to scorch the brass skin of his soles. The sun could not penetrate the stubbly thatch of his hair. His hands were scornful of the thistle-spikes. That is the sort of children they are, these who are born into the colonies. The most stalwart of their elders would as little dream of putting their naked feet down on the hot earth as on a hot oven. The things which the elders wrought with such expenditure of blood and sweat, the children will take in their stride, so quickly has the sun taken to its bosom the children of the ghetto-stormers.

It is not quite so easy with the inner membranes of the stomach as with the outer membranes of scalp and sole. It will take that small Jewish lad a century or two before he eats thistles with such delight as young Abdullah, who requested Allah to put his peace upon us. For this was what was happening. The Jewish



TIBERIAS  
(After the painting by Rabin)





boy was solemnly cutting down thistles for Abdullah to peel and eat. He might have handed them over less liberally if he had himself acquired the astounding taste. I must confess that never before have I seen such a banquet with my own eyes ; though I remember having read a description of one in Goethe's Autobiography. He describes how he saw two Sicilian noblemen, no less, standing before a patch of these thistles, " and with their pocket-knives cutting off the tops of the tall shoots. Then holding their prickly booty by the tops of the fingers, they peeled off the rind, and devoured the inner part with great satisfaction. In this way they occupied themselves a considerable time."

So did Abdullah, whom we left to his orgy with the small Jewish boy ministering to him. Amos, the ministrant's name was. "What?" we inquired, "are you a prophet?" "Not yet!" the child replied solemnly, contemplating a peeled thistle.

The casual passer-by might have taken this incident of Amos and Abdullah as a type of the relations between the Jews and Arabs by Galilee. It is a prophecy, rather than an epitome. Little Amos is a prophet sooner than he suspects. But his father peeled no thistle-sticks for the father of Abdullah. In the early history of Deganieh, rifles were the playthings rather than thistles. The day of the rifle is not quite ended even now, not while that sprightly horseman, Kamel Douban, fondles his deadly toy from Damascus and glides, a phantom horseman, through the groves, on nights of no moon.

It was J. Baratz who told me about Kamel Douban, as he stood washing up the plates at the kitchen-sink. A scullion and a grandee of the colony, as the latest of the arrivals is ; but he is, in point of fact, one of its Pilgrim Fathers. America and Europe know him ; he is one of the survivors of the earliest colonisation, one of its heroes, a signatory to a certain document promulgated in 1911 out of which the *kvutzah* organisation developed, a most adept washer of plates by the kitchen-sink. This was the tale he told me of Kamel Douban, whose name, in Arabic, means beautiful or perfect, or alternatively, dove. Never was wandering Bedouin tribesman less like a dove than he. Small he is as an assistant draper, lean he is as a yard-broom, but he has eyes like twin points of black flame. He is twenty-eight years old. He lives beyond Jordan somewhere in the great no-man's-land of raiders and assassins. The Bedouins say of him a bullet fired by him from the barrel of his deadly toy from Damascus has never failed of its mark. Such eyes he has. Baratz mused again, his own eyes gentle enough as he leaned over the sink, but capable of some ferocity, I did not doubt, when the moment arose.

It was three and a half years ago that the tribesmen of his clan again carried out a raid on the colony of Deganieh, a more frequent sport in the good old days of the Turks. All night each of the colonies is defended by a watchman on horseback. Solemnly, steadily, all night long he makes his rounds about the woods and gardens, the byres, the houses of the sleeping children. The raiders stole through his guard. I do not remember

if this was one of the occasions when a dexterously aimed bullet caught the watchman neatly between the temples and dislodged him from his mount. But the colonists were awakened. The raiders were repulsed. The brother of Kamel Douban did not return to his Transjordanian lair.

So the blood-feud was established between the tribe of Kamel Douban and the southern reaches of Galilee. For the whole district becomes involved, not merely the immediate perpetrators of an offence. They draw no distinctions between gratuitous violence and a violence wrought in self-defence. Blood must flow. And there is no reason in the world why the blood-letting should not be preceded by an intensive campaign of robbery and terrorism. The swift horses, the silky rugs, the mild kids, the odorous stooks of hay, wherewith Kamel Douban assuaged his sorrows ! And on a day when he was riding from Tiberias in the direction of the colony of Kinnereth, his head-cloth floating behind him, his toy from Damascus itching and kicking by his shoulders—he became aware suddenly what small change are the milkiest cows, the woolliest lambs. A diligence was passing by, loaded with Arabs, like bananas on a banana branch. He raised his rifle, chose his man, shot him neatly between the temples. He learned later, with mild displeasure, that the Arab was no fellah from the lower reaches of Galilee. He was a townsman. He came from some sink of metropolitan iniquity like Haifa. That was not at all the same thing. A pity. Matters stood where they stood before. Blood was still to flow. He added to his

solaces further fat cattle and silks and diverse booty. Then the anniversary came of the night upon which he had lost his guiltless brother. Once more he descended upon Deganieh, but his luck was out. He was winged by the same fellow as had winged his brother. He was handed over to the police and tried, on numerous charges. There was no difficulty about the thefts. Some of the booty was recovered. He made no bones about the stealing. But with respect to the charge of murder, he defended himself with a cynical and dazzling eloquence. To some of his hearers the sophistications of the most illustrious western counsel seemed in retrospect tepid and schoolboyish. You would have presumed as soon to condemn the forked lightning as to condemn the dreadful eyes of Kamel Douban. "Bring my accusers, bring the witnesses!" he cried. "Who saw me slay?" He waited nonchalantly. There were no accusers. He served his sentence for robbery, like a little gentleman, and was released not long ago. But what a release was there! What splendour of desert banners, when he reached the place of his own tribesmen! How the gleaming flanks of their horses shone! How brilliantly their teeth flashed from the swarthy faces! What manœuvres, what caracolings, what incredible feats of horsemanship!

What balancings upon a single toe, what hangings on by a single eyelash! What a rattle their rifles made, discharged against the drum of noon! And how much the most splendid of them all was little Kamel Douban, small as a draper's assistant, lean as any yard-broom!



Hardly had he issued from the doors of the gaol when such silks and gold cords transformed him as would have done no dishonour to the Caliph himself, in old Bagdad ! Furiously he and his men rode all day till they reached the plain of welcome in the evening. And if these that awaited him performed feats such as no other horseman in the world could have performed, the feats of Kamel Douban were nearer to levitation than to horsemanship.

Until the day ended at length in a banquet of simmering mutton and snowy mounds of rice, such as that region holds no record of. And high above the savoury mountain, the teeth glared out of the sheep's skull, and deep under the head-cloth of Kamel Douban, the black eyeballs stared. And the banquet being over, it was time to think of business.

There was, to begin with, that little matter of Deganieh.

But he does not deem that blood has paid for blood yet, not the right blood. He is to be seen from time to time in the neighbourhood of Deganieh. He rises in his stirrups. He places his hand to his bosom and bows gallantly. A moment later he is fled like a wind, urgent on his own mysterious business.

Blood has not flowed for blood yet, it is true. But these British invaders, you understand. . . . They do not understand the punctilios. They are parvenus. What do you say, O men of Deganieh, these being degenerate days, to liquidating the obligation with a good round sum of money ? Or if money is a little tight at the moment, what with these economic crises



in your Tel Avivs, how about so much down and so much to be handed over in the shape of live-stock and crops? It is not, you realise perfectly, that we care for money and live-stock for their own gross sakes; the decencies must be preserved.

And that is how it stands, said J. Baratz, drying the last plate by the kitchen-sink. That is how it stands. He is a good horseman.

Washing-up being over, we crossed the flowery space between the dining-hall and the airy house where the sixty colonists are housed, to the cemetery beyond the olive-groves, over against the green Jordan. Sixteen colonists lie here, under the swinging draperies of the eucalyptus trees. Thick beds of rushes stand by the water's edge. Overhead a few birds sing tonelessly. Not all of them have their stones erected yet, and the stones are simple—a fluted pillar crowned with an urn, an unchiselled slab. Little eloquence or none is engraved upon them. Yet their story affected me more powerfully than all the resonance of Père Lachaise in Paris or the frescoed magnificence of the Campo Santo in Pisa. I recalled the multitudinous graves of the Valley of Jehoshaphat in Jerusalem, whither the Jews from the utmost ends of the world gather to lay down their bones. But this humble graveyard in Deganieh seemed to me a nobler place to lie in, and its inhabitants to have been nobler men, even he who died by his own hand, because he did not think himself capable of that nobility. To the others Palestine was the supreme charnel-house, to these the supreme dwelling-place.

The story of colonisation in Palestine is one worthy to rank with any chapter in the long Jewish tale, and the gravestones of Deganieh tell it very simply and concisely. You learn that very few of these dead died a normal death—by which they mean a death from sickness. Here, for instance, lies a lady named Fruma Mechler. She died of cholera during the war, when the Turks seized the colony and imprisoned some hundreds of men and women in a shack where ten might not breathe with comfort. Her brother was one of several who died of thirst in a forlorn railway-waggon under a blistering sun.

Here lies Moisheh Barsky who died at the age of nineteen. He had been sent to the settlement at Menchamia to bring medicine for a sick comrade. As he rode his horse alongside the swirling Jordan, a gang of Bedouin raiders fell upon him. He dismounted, engaged the attackers, and sent the beast galloping off home to Deganieh, for the colony was poor and could ill afford its loss. So he stood up to his enemies and fought and died. His friends sent a letter home to his father in Russia, to tell him the sad news, to which the old man replied: "Why do you console me? It is you who need consolation. I have still two sons and two daughters. There is still myself, for what I am worth." The old man and his children came over duly. He has lived to see a less precarious day dawn over the wheat-lands where his son died.

Hard by lies another, whom the war conditions enfeebled and a virulent influenza laid low.

Here lies a certain teacher, peace be upon him, who gave up arduous teaching for a more arduous study, coming over from Galicia to be one of the yeomen of Palestine. He felt himself unworthy of his colleagues and of the work he had put his hand to, and so shot himself.

Next to him another lad lies, to whom also the dark demon came in the stifling night-watches. There can have been none, not even the stoutest of them, to whom sometimes he did not whisper seductively: "Well, and what is it all worth? Who will support you? Who has supported you? You are doomed. You have tried and failed. Nothing lies before you but aching bones and empty guts, hot lead or cold fever. You are doomed. Get out of it!" But they were strong men and women for the most part. They curled their lips derisively and turned over on their sides and sank into sleep and awoke again. But this lad who lies beside the Galician teacher had not that sort of strength. He stole over to the grave of the lad Barsky, whom the Arabs had murdered. A very silent youth he was, rather grim, a hard worker till that last day upon which he laid his gear down for the last time. He left a note for his friends, rather ironical in its tone: "You are awaiting the English. Well, I'm finished. You can have my share of them. Tell my parents that——" But at this point his decision seems to have wavered. The handwriting was less steady, the words of a sentimentality which he would have scorned in less extreme moments. "But when I remember them, I fear I'll not be able to bring it off."

But he did. They found him on the grave of his young friend early next morning.

His neighbour is another lad of nineteen. The heat smote him. He died of inflammation of the brain.

This was a dark, lean little Yemenite, who had come up across the enormous Arabian desert to live in his Holy Land. On a journey from Jaffa to Damascus he died, and he was buried among the western men, he, the most inveterate and stiff-necked of the Eastern Jews. But he, too, bent his neck to the Palestine dream.

This young man was drowned in the Jordan here. So also was this, only a week or two ago, who lies in the freshest of the graves. He was a Jewish gendarme. His Arab and Christian friends come here and mourn for him.

This man barked his shin with a spade, as he was thrusting down into the hard fields, and so contracted blood-poisoning and died.

This man saw his wife struggling desperately in the green vortex beyond the rushes. He and she had made a long journey together and worked hard. They were lovers. He jumped in after her, but shock had already arrested his heart before he reached the water.

Here lies Isaac Shiffron, who was sixteen years old. He tramped over from Russia, keeping pace with the men. He worked as hard as any man for a few weeks and then died.

Here lies the father of Deganieh, Joseph Bussel, an honoured name amongst all the pioneers in Palestine. He was out on the Lake of Galilee on a windless day. A storm came circling down among the rifts of the



Galilean hills westward; so he was capsized and drowned.

His friend, A. D. Gordon, lies close to him. He died of cancer at the age of sixty-seven, but he thrust his spade home and washed his dishes almost till the last moment. These two might be called the saints of the Labour Movement in Palestine. In cheap enlargements their faces stare woodenly down above every dining-table in the *Kvuzoth*. A Bellini might have crowned them with a Doge's cap and set them against the marble door-posts of a Venetian palace, or a Rubens might have bound them about with gold and scarlet. But they do not have less honour in the pallid enlargements, hardly visible through the fly-blown glass.

This baby died of malaria. This lad was twelve years old when he died.

And here lies, as we have said, Moisheh Barsky. We spoke of him—we return to him. His name, in Russian, means “lordly.” It is not inapposite.

But one grave lies away from the others, in the centre of the olive-grove. Here lies the girl, Sarah Lakin, the tutelary spirit, as it were, of the colony of Deganieh. It was in war-time that she died, when the Turks and Germans occupied this tall white house we can glimpse beyond the olives and the close-growing eucalyptus.

How swiftly those others grow (mused Baratz aloud), but it is not so with these olives. All except one of the olives. This way. Let me show you. We have to water the roots of the olives carefully several times during the dry season, though they require, as a rule, so little



in the way of soil and water to keep them green. The soil here is poor, of course. Look at these pebbles. This was the course of the Jordan once. We planted almonds, but they failed. Oh, you must expect a lot of disappointments of that sort. Even when things seem to be most flourishing, a tiny insect hatches out in the night. They are studying these things, yes, up in the laboratory of the University on Mount Scopus. We shall be of use to each other. Look at this eucalyptus. We only planted it a couple of years ago. We are already using the wood. We cut it down two metres from the ground last year. It has already put forth three branches several metres high. No tree grows so luxuriously as the eucalyptus, excepting this olive-tree, Sarah Lakin's tree. But that, I suppose, is a mystery.

It was in 1917. The Turks and Germans were in the house, but they still allowed us to keep one or two things going. The watchman was out beyond the ploughland there. It was evening and Sarah Lakin went out to see to things while he got his kit ready for the night-watch. His rifle was loaded, and she stumbled against it. It went off and killed her. Here was a quandary. It was just the sort of accident that the Turks and Germans were waiting for. They would, of course, say it had been murder; and quite apart from the baksheesh which the Turks would have promptly claimed, and gone on claiming, it would give the German staff a handle for the confiscation of the few rights the colonists had managed to retain.

It was decided, therefore, to keep the matter dark.

She was buried under this olive-tree at the dead of night. Almost immediately, as it seemed, it grew like a tree enchanted. It has been pruned and cut again and again, but, as you see, it is still the most luxurious olive-tree in any grove in this country.

Look ! The branches droop with their weight of leaves, and fruit in the season. It is like a weeping willow that is not barren. Strange, yes ?

We returned to the white dwelling-house through an air hot with the aromatic odours of mint and poppy and chicory. The lizards darted across the black-etched pattern of eucalyptus leaves. Faintly, from the place of the graves by the reeds and the river, the toneless birds talked on.

CHAPTER XV  
GHOSTS BY GALILEE

DEGANIEH has more than justified them all, the fever and the fret, the grind of the years. You being a Seventh Day Adventist, a Carthusian monk, a yogi, an atheist, would have a dull eye not to find it so, as you looked down upon the colony from the roof terrace of the dwelling-house. The children are about you lying down upon white sheets under the white netting. Under the parapet the garden is a flare of colour—an enormous hedge of bougainvillæa hanging against the wall of the dining-room; close below, the mauve branches of the jicaranda trees. The scarlet tongues of hibiscus blossoms poke into its own dark depths. Pomegranate is hung with blossom like a child's Christmas tree with toy trumpets. Stocks and lavender and marigold and lilies are banked up in formal beds. Beyond the garden the groves extend, olive and eucalyptus and bananas unfurling their ragged fans. Beyond these the harvested fields extend, the mown crops lying in swathes. A rustic cart creaks through them, carrying a Jewish farmer and his wife and their children, bronzed as ribstone pippins. Beyond them Jordan smiles, the river being still limpid here, a fluid dangerous emerald. Around the bend of the river is a small company of fishermen, casting their

lines. These are experts from Salonica, who have for ages trafficked with lines and rods and bait. They have come here to teach sea-wisdom to the inland men, who pressed trousers in small wooden towns in the great plains of Central Europe.

Fishermen in Salonica. . . . Ghosts in Palestine. . . . A curious fate that I should look down upon these men fishing now from the roof of a Jewish house in Palestine, and that I should have looked down on their fishing over a decade ago from the roof of certain military premises on the quayside in Salonica; and beyond blue waters then I saw the snowy marvel of Olympus with Ossa and Pelion climbing towards it, and now beyond blue waters I saw the snowy marvel of Hermon with the hills of Gilead climbing towards it. A great fire, it will be remembered, broke out in Salonica, and the little sheds of the Jewish fishermen, where they kept their nets and tackle, had been reduced to cinders. There, by the edge of Galilee, my mind fell to musing upon their fate, in the great encampment of the derelicts on the plain by the Kalamarian seashore. All confounded they were, the sellers of olives, the manufacturers of soap, the fishers of the red mullet, disconsolate upon the heaps of their bedding. All day Olympus flushed hard with a white, undying fire. Then at evening Olympus softened into indeterminate banks of rose-red and purple. The sun set beyond Macedon. There were green rifts westward, between layers of thin ineffable gold, and against these rifts the rigging of ships showed marvellously delicate. But the disconsolate sellers of olives and fishers of mullet had no

eyes for that beauty, where they mourned their ruin among the salvage of pillows and sauce-pans. But their ruin was not so final as it had seemed. The sellers of olives grow them now in Palestine. And the fishermen of Salonica, that once went out into deep waters to outline their sails of pearl and scarlet against Olympus, go out now upon Jordan and Galilee to cozen forth their silver flounderers.

Ghosts in Palestine. . . . As I lay there upon the terrace, the air was full of well-being. There was a sense of travails over. The children slept peacefully about me under the netting. Bees buzzed in the thick flowers below. The groves were rich with promise of fruit. The anxiety and harshness of the stripling colonies did not perturb them here. So my mind was free to fill itself with the beauty of Galilee. Lifted above the lake there, as on a platform, it seemed to me that Galilee was the very nucleus of the land, the loveliest of waters. My mind recurred to the lakes of Switzerland and Italy, and these seemed in retrospect, as I gazed down upon this sheet of astounding blue, to have been nothing more than sets for melodrama. The lakes of England are cosy; but they had not this breathless awe. As for the great lakes of America—it might be possible, I thought, by a very extravagant drainage system, to establish lakes with even more water in them, somewhere in Tartary. Possibly there are some already.

It was the blueness of Galilee that took the eyes and the heart that day. And that seemed because the lake not merely distils the sky's blueness, but



because it had the quality of something you must delve for in mines. It is under sea-level, so that as you gaze upon it, on such a day as this was in Deganieh, the fancy takes you that the panels of the earth are drawn aside, and you look down upon the central caverns of enchantment.

But as the lifted fish floundered, as the unsleeping bees probed the flowers, it seemed to be of a blueness as alive and tremulous as the blue of the thistles upon the bank that seemed at this moment to give out a visible incense upon the hot noon. The oleander bushes bled among the bankside reeds. And of a sudden the whole lake seemed to concentrate and offer itself in the shape of a bright blue-bird which launched itself upon the air, more like a swift wizardry, than mere bone and flesh and feathers. The sun stood high in the mid-day heavens. But there seemed another and a more enchanted light that pulsed from behind the mountains that encompassed Gilead, till they seemed translucent, like alabaster—till the lake itself seemed, miraculously, to be lifted upon the heads of the mountains. It was a lake no longer. It was the central panel of the sky.

O fellow-wanderers, threaders of the thorny thickets of Diaspora, trudgers through the sandy wastes of Diaspora, this is no unlovely land whither your kinsmen are returning now. And the eyes of small children awaking upon the roof-tops of Deganieh are not less limpid than the waters they gaze out upon, limpid waters of Galilee, where the returners have pitched their tents.

So I dreamed idly, looking down upon Galilee—the phrase perpetually recurring like a chime—ghosts in Palestine. Here was Galilee, where a most illustrious Jewish ghost walks, stilling the tempest. But I dared not permit of my bemused spirit to walk forth and touch the hem of the robe of that great Rabbi. I was too remotely withdrawn among my tiny particular ghosts to attempt so colossal an evocation. Galilee remained something external, a panel in a room, a slab of mineral. Even when we descended from the rooftop of Deganieh to set forth again, though we journeyed in physical fact by the lake waters, and we saw them lapping the tamarisk and oleander and the walls of a city living and many dead, I still kept Galilee beyond the portals of conscious thought. It shimmered through the eye-lashes like strung curtains of lapis lazuli. But my mind was among the ghosts of Palestine, as we skirted Tiberias and Capernaum and rose into the mountains of Upper Galilee, and beheld the thin tongue of Jordan below issuing from the curled snake of the waters of Merom, and flanking these the marshes shaggy with buffaloes, and lifted marvellously beyond these the white ghost of Hermon.

I knew that soon or late I should return to Galilee and all these ghosts. It seemed proper to contain in one single experience Esdraelon and its colonies, Jordan and its colonies, and those last Jewish colonies beyond Galilee, which extend northward to Dan, where the French frontiersmen are. Forth, therefore, beyond Galilee to Rosh-Pinah, to Tel Hai where the Jewish hero, Trumpeldor, died, to Kvar Gileadi

where his grave is, to Metullah at the end of the land.

Ghosts in Palestine . . . Fishermen from Salonica . . . that stern lady with pince-nez in Jerusalem, who long ago in Doomington looked so sternly at me and rapped my knuckles and bade me stand in the corner of the room . . . Galilee flowing by me like a river of blue flame. . . .

And yet, I said to myself, leaning back against the cushions of the car, holding away from my shut eyelids the seduction of Galilee—and yet Jewish flesh is nowhere in the world so substantial as in Palestine, a thing knit so firmly upon a framework of such straight bones. The Jew stands upon his feet, firmly and easily, looking into any man's eyes. The frail or flabby creature who stews in the western sweating-dens is not to be seen in this place ; or at most is to be seen briefly. The frail one puts on stature, the flabby one puts off flesh, under the impact of wind and sun. That other westerner, the dapper creature who minces about the marble eating-houses and the suburban dancing-halls, that poor gadfly and redoubtable charlestoneer, he is not attracted to Palestine. And if perchance a wind from Palestine blows his way and sucks him, too, into the vortex, though he kick out feebly with his patent-shod slim feet, the transformation befalls him too, poor darling. A few months later you behold his slightly greasy dinner-jacket flapping on a stake in a field of young maize ; for his part he wears nothing above the waist but a bronze skin—or in times of festival a white smock in the Russian mode, falling

loose over his belted trousers. Embroidered about the neck it is, with a pattern of green leaves and blue flowers. No self-respecting charlestoneer would wear it among the lady instructors (one shilling per hour) of the Swishem Dancing Palace. But it will serve to dance the Hora in, the dance of the *Chalutzim*, among the gathered sheaves of Esdraelon at the Feast of Weeks. Oh, thou that wert a so frail seamstress and art now so stalwart, oh, thou that wert a pappy hillock of bank-clerkery and doßt now preside over the water-pumps, and not least, thou, my friend, ex-charlestoneer and present ploughman—clap your hands more firmly upon the shoulders next to you, rotate more swiftly, fill your lungs and expend song more generously—swifter ! swifter ! How do the words go ?

What ? How do the words ago ? Does the insistent babble of Galilee among the rose-laurel drown the recollection of them ? Or the shout of the hucksterers in the stalls of Tiberias ? They are the words that the Jews sing in Palestine here when they dance the Hora at the times when labours are ended and hearts are easy and the synagogues are bright with festival. You have not forgotten ? Did not even the little Arab lads go about the steep streets of Nablus whistling the tune ? And where was it we met the English governor of the gaol by Acre—did he, too, not deliver himself of it—words and music ? The words are the words of Hillel, whose wisdom more than any other, Jesus, the son of Mary of Nazareth, expounded here upon this plain of Gennesareth at our left hand. Did the small urchins of Magdala and Bethsaida whistle them too ? For they



must have had their catches and their roundelays in this land, which once was so bountiful with trees and streams. The words are by Hillel, the master of Jesus, and the music is the work of those later mystics, his successors, the *Chassidim* of Galicia. So that the words of the song upon the lips of mystics and pioneers, *Chassidim* and *Chalutzim*, of Arab urchins in Shechem and English governors of gaols by Acre, is a résumé of Jewish theology and an epitome of Palestinian politics !

*Im ein ani li mi li*

*Im lo akhshev eimatei ;*

which, being translated, runs :

If not I for me, then who's for me ?

And if not now, when ?

A comelier dance would you say, O charlestoneer ? But which of you might he have been ? I can recognise among you no dapper creature who once minced about the marble eating-houses and suburban dancing-halls, you who are all equally the yeomen of Palestine, tough-sinewed, flesh knit firmly on a framework of straight bones.

Yet you are ghosts, though you cast your nets so featly in Galilee, O my Salonicans, and plough your furrows so straight, O my charlestoneers. Surely I have been in no land where the air was so odd with sudden evocations, so shimmered with lost recovered lights, was so populous with phantoms. I do not mean this in the impersonal, or should I say rather, the superpersonal or racial, sense of the words I have been using. It is true that the phantoms of the Bible throng



the sunlight and the moonlight, issuing from the close ranks of Hebrew character where the Law has contained them for these thousands of years. David once more walks the hills, shepherding his sheep, and Abraham, wearing the caftan of the *yeshiveh* at Hebron, meditates silently, stretched full-length under the oaks of Mamre. Miriam, having cloven the Western Ocean upon the "Berengaria," sings no less joyously than of old time upon the yellow strand of Tel Aviv. Rebekah, in the *chassidic* colony of Nahlat Jacob, still cherishes her younger son. The lover in the grove of Rosh-Pinah still sings for his beloved the Song of Songs, she who has come up from Sharon to be the lily of the valleys of Galilee. And the traffickers sit in the narrow streets of Jerusalem, marketing shoes and spices and soap, though they do no longer penetrate with their doves to the arcades of the Temple where Mahound set himself down among those "five hundred houris and four thousand virgins and eight thousand divorced women" whom, in his "Traditions," he has promised to every true Muslim (and it is not to be expected that for his own part he was content with a less reward). No, I do not mean merely that Palestine is a place of phantoms, in that the patriarchs and the shepherds, the women at the wells and the lads in the pools, are before our eyes again, bearing now the aspects of the antique Torah, and now the aspects of contemporary Rumania, Tennessee, Manchester, Mogador.

There is no Jew who does not go home when he goes to Palestine, howsoever friendly his exile be, howsoever courteous his neighbours. He goes home not

in a poetic sense only, but in a sense less magnificent, more intimate, quite actual. I would take as an example my own boyhood in Doomington, that dark city in the north of England, how curiously it rallied about me in Palestine, with humour and pathos at the same time.

And in that same way every Jew's boyhood rallies about him, brushing his shoulders among the hucksterers of the Jaffa gate or stretching out a hand to reach down a tumbler of milkless tea from a stall in Afuleh. These are not the winds of Upper Galilee that whistle about his ears, but those that once whipped the black tarns of Westmorland, or contorted the pine-forests on the Danube by Ratisbon. And in these places he recreates the long griefs and the long raptures (so much longer then) that racked or exalted him in his boyhood on a creek of the Dnieper or in a square, gloomy house of Charlottenburg. The ghosts of childhood besiege him; its echoes arise and command his ears. He is deaf to the Bedouin singing the whiteness of his maiden's teeth and to the snarling of the camel as he folds his legs under him. This is not hibiscus blossoming in these hedges, nor oleander by these streams. The dusty parallelograms of tulips are banked up in the melancholy alleys of the Victoria Council Park.

My own Doomington, it may be, is an unbeautiful city, yet it has for me a sort of beauty that transcends Siena and Rothenburg, and an awe more valid than Rome. I had, indeed, hardly drawn a second breath in Jerusalem when the stern lady I have spoken of bore down upon me and said, ah! here I was at length.

And she affixed her pince-nez upon her nose, precisely with the gesture she used twenty years ago, when she taught me in the Second Standard that they make needles in Ipswich. Not a hair in her head was greyer, not a wrinkle added to her cheeks. I swear she wore, even twenty years ago, that same back-comb, this lady of permanent unshingledness. It was the awe of Doomington she incarnated, rather than the beauty. The twenty years and twenty lands that had intervened since last I saw her were expunged. I was a small lad haled before her more than Mosaic tribunal. I was watery at the knees. Would she rap my knuckles with the ruler or keep me in after school was over? And how was it, she asked, that I came to smash Barney's spectacles? She folded her arms and waited grimly for a reply.

Tears started in my eyes. I could have howled down David's Citadel and sent the farther walls of the city toppling over into the Valley of Kidron. For it was not I that smashed Barney's spectacles that grey morning in the playground. It was Barney who smashed mine—Barney who smashed mine.

Anxiously I tried to tell her so, that stern lady with the pince-nez and the back-comb. She would have none of it. "Go to your place!" she said. "I have come!" I whispered. "I have come to Jerusalem!" But she did not hear me. She moved away in her solitary awe. And I did not, I did *not* smash Barney's spectacles.

So Palestine recreated for me the solemnity of my childhood in the most solemn of her cities. So in the

colony of Deganieh, all the tumult and terror of the Macedonian war was recreated for me, as I looked towards Galilee and beheld the Aegean, as I saw Mount Hermon merge its snows into the ravines of Olympus. But I must tell here how in that green colony of Ramat Gan which laces the red dunes above Jaffa with rows of vines and bananas and melons and cucumbers, Palestine recreated something rarer than the solemnity of childhood, something more fragrant—the heartbreak of first love. For I saw Jessie there, at the doorstep of her small house, under an arbour of yellow roses, with her children about her. And Jessie belonged to an epoch later by some æons than that late day upon which I did not smash Barney's spectacles (peace be upon Barney, where his bones lie in Gallipoli!) It was in fact two years later, and I was twelve years old and she ten. I knew at once that that was Jessie, not because the eldest of her children was a precise replica of the small lady I had loved in Doomington, but because no one else in all those intervening years had ever tilted her chin so, or carried her shoulders so, or looked into the sky with such limpid eyes. And I have not loved any one else among all the world's ladies as I loved Jessie. But America took Jessie and left me disconsolate. I had nothing more to carry into manhood than a swift, startled gleam of Jessie's whiteness, as she flashed between the two sole chambers of her house, the room she had disrobed in and the room where her mother stood akimbo over a steaming zinc bath. That gleam and glimpse were not a thing of my own fashioning any more than his vision of Bath-sheba





"ZION FOUND HER AT LENGTH"



FISHERMEN ON JORDAN





was a thing David had premeditated when he went forth to take the air upon his roof-top. Yet the Lord punished me almost as severely as David, though Heaven wot, I sent no Uriah into the forefront of any assault against the small Gentiles of our street. Jessie was lost to me. America gained her ; but gained her for a time only. Zion found her at length, and her husband grows oranges there, oranges like Chinese lamps, the oranges of Jaffa that are as large as pumpkins and sweet as honey. She had disappeared from my horizon completely, and I had not known she was married. What man was fit to tie her shoelace? More than once the wistful thought had come to me that even I might not have been a more fantastic competitor for that honour than the next man. But in Ramat Gan my wistfulness was exorcised when her stalwart husband—tall as a cypress he seemed—joined her at sunset. Strong sires of bronzed Palestinians, who knows but that their children's children's children shall uproot the last thorn from Judea and hear the last dry water-course between Dan and Beersheba clamorous with summer water !

Ghosts, I said—ghosts in Palestine. Now Galilee lay below me, where Simon called Peter cast his nets, and a fisherman from Salonica, of Peter's race, by name also Simon, casts for the same fish again. Here were we at the shady groves of Rosh-Pinah, where they bid you dismount lest you carry into Syria, for the use of the Druses upon Lebanon, firearms and perfumes and drugs. And here it was where I met a creature who seemed most certainly and literally a ghost, in so

much as I had known him dead and here he was manifest before my eyes. For did they not tell me circumstantially in the darkest season of the war how my friend, a certain Harry, who had emigrated to South Africa in his thirteenth year and in his seventeenth had joined the Imperial forces—did they not tell me with a great wealth of detail how he had been blown to pieces at Bapaume? But did I not see him in the very sturdy and complete flesh emerge from a barn at Rosh-Pinah with pickaxe balanced upon his shoulder? And did I not suppress the instinct to scream and, more usefully, did I not cry, “Shalom, Harry!” what time the pickaxe slipped from Harry’s shoulder and almost lopped off his besandalled toes whilst he stuttered “Shalom!” so incredulously as to suggest that I and not he was the ghostly returner?

And could you not say of the returned Harry, sweating at his job on the soil of Palestine, that he is a bodying forth of the latter-day miracle which has befallen the Jewish race? Blown to pieces on the battle-grounds of the world, dispersed, annihilated, are not the scattered parts wondrously assembled in the Land of Israel, coherent, dynamic, a race again?

Ghosts in Palestine—but they are wrought out of a texture more durable than stone.

It was a discovery of which I received a touching corroboration a few hours later, when we reached the breezy colony of Tel Hai. Our journey had begun at a level of six hundred feet below sea-level. Here at Tel Hai we were breathing mountain airs. The blood flows more freely, there is more elasticity in the step

of these colonists, more light in their eyes. On these slopes you are lifted from mirage and fantasy ; towards evening the wind is so strong and cool that a man might think himself in the Grampian uplands, or on the wide savannahs of the Middle West. Yet here, too, the ghosts are about him, though they are incarnated by such tall men and sturdy women. So Mr Mendelevitch declared (I change his name somewhat), in an entry in the visitors' book at Tel Hai. The book is housed in a barn which is holy ground to the enthusiasts for Jewish colonisation, for here died Josef Trumpeldor, one of the bravest of the pioneers. This region has been more subject to Bedouin raids than any in Palestine, in both the pre-war and the post-war periods. And a fresh danger was added in 1920, when the Syrian Bedouins, having risen in revolt against the French, came sweeping southward over the frontier, which is only a few miles away. Trumpeldor felt that to yield an inch of ground which Jewish money had bought and Jewish labour had so arduously developed would be treachery to his cause. With a handful of lads and girls he took up his stand in this barn at Tel Hai. All were killed. In this same barn a somewhat florid monument recalls the tragic day. It is more fittingly recorded by the great slabs of rough marble which stand over their graves in the neighbouring colony of Kfar Gileadi. It was a day made tragic by more than the deaths of Trumpeldor and his friends ; for they need not have died. The news was being brought to them that whatever guerilla successes the raiders were to score, the integrity of the Syrian-Palestine

frontier was at all costs to be preserved. The news came too late. And yet it is easy to believe that magnificent as those young men and women were, they achieved more by dying, even unnecessarily, for their cause, than they could have achieved had they lived to however great and strenuous an old age. For surely many heroisms can be proved to have been in themselves vain, but in their effects to have been valuable beyond computation. So Trumpeldor will survive many years beyond his life's natural term. His name is like a rousing summons to the young men and women of Palestine in seasons of discouragement, when the talkers and the writers beyond the seas are at their most doleful. When the wheat is all harvested and the fruit-crops taken down, they set forth with rucksacks slung over their shoulders to tramp the hot leagues to Trumpeldor. A ghost in Palestine, durable as any stone.

So, as I have said, deemed Mr Mendelevitch of New York, as the visitors' book in Trumpeldor's barn records. "With awe and reverence," he writes, "for the men and women who have given their lives so bravely while I was enjoying prosperity in America. They have made Jewish history while I tried to make filthy lucre. I stand with hat in hand ashamed of myself, but with profound respect for those that lived for a better cause than mine."

But, perhaps even more eloquent than that document itself, is the signature :

"S. Mendelevitch, previously of New York, but now of Palestine."



*Now of Palestine.* The document strikes me as of not less significance in Jewish history than any that perished in the great fire at Alexandria or any of the protocols of the Elders of Zion. It is a footnote to the historic document in which the British mandate is declared. It is the certificate of the great Change of Heart. In it the tradition of filthy-lucre-making is forsworn for ever, whether the ancestors of Mr Mendelevitch chose it because of their original evil, or because their Gentile lords prevented them from making anything less filthy. I have the conviction that the luggage of Mr Mendelevitch was all packed in the vestibule of his hotel in Jerusalem, disposed in various groups, cabin luggage, not wanted during voyage, etc. He had his return ticket to New York in his pocket. He was doing Palestine in two days, so that there was not much time for the Jewish colonies. Somewhat rebelliously, he accepted the suggestion that he might devote half a day to the Jewish colonies, which are the realised dream of two thousand years. The ghosts pressed in upon him. His complacency deserted him. He looked this way and that way, wondering what this dark unease was. He was spirited into the barn of Josef Trumpeidor. The lances of light poured in through the bullet-holes. A ghost was in the room, touched him coldly upon his temples. He blinked. The sweat ran round the rim of his stiff collar. Suddenly he heard, he saw. America crumbled. A flush was upon his cheeks, he thrust his hand into his inside-pocket. He hurled the fragments of his return ticket to America through the open doorway of the barn. The moorland wind

carried them gustily towards the green marshes of Merom. "A pen! A pen!" he cried, and wrote his testament: "*Previously of New York, but now of Palestine.*"

Yet it is fortunate, surely, for the financial stability of the great Republic that the ghost of Trumpeldor does not so desperately affect all his transpontine visitors. Only a few days later the same book records the visit of a magnate from Oil City, U.S.A.

"Have visited," a Mr Resin writes, "the *kvutzah* of Tel Hai and it has made a good impression."

Oh, Mr Resin, Mr Resin, oh! Not in vain have the pioneers tramped a thousand miles and another thousand miles, and been herded into the pestilent bottom of emigrant-ships and marched to the upbuilding of Zion and built it up with tears and blood. Not in vain did the body of Trumpeldor lie sweltering upon this threshold, riddled with bullets. For Tel Hai had produced a good impression upon Mr Resin of Oil City in U.S.A. Blessings on your frosty pow!

And not less on yours, Mr Harris of the same city, who inscribe your name under the illustrious name of Mr Resin. "Like the place very much!" Bow your bloody heads, O ghosts!

The actual grave of Trumpeldor can hardly have made quite such a good impression on Mr Resin. It lies on a windy plateau near the penultimate colony of Kfar Gileadi, on the ridge of the hill beyond Tel Hai. No expensive railings surround it. No chiselled monument is his headstone—nothing but a crude jut of red granite hacked from a Jewish quarry by Jewish hands. Beside him lie the lads and girls who died with

him. The wind shakes the wild oats into fluid silver. A bronze-dark carob-tree gives shade at mid-day. Young cypresses stand about them. A colony of tall self-sown purple hollyhocks strain at their roots. The rough slopes break down into the marshes of Merom, which are bright green with a poisonous brightness. Farthest away of all the hills is Hermon, which rejoices with Tabor from the north to the south. Hidden beyond the end of the land is Lebanon, beyond the last Jewish lights at Metullah. You might think the wild oats were a silver cloth, so flat they lie against the winds blowing. The sheen of the wild oats flows like a white flame up the slopes of Hermon and Tabor, and against the woods of Lebanon breaks into slim grass again.

Are you content, maiden, under your olive-tree over in Deganieh? And you others upon your windy hill, are you content?

Let the writers exhaust their ink-pots, the talkers deflate all their lungs, I do not doubt they sleep easily under the olive-tree that droops like a willow, by the hedge of tall hollyhocks that strain at their roots in the great winds.

CHAPTER XVI  
THE EXCLUDED COUNTRY

I

IN the colony of Metullah there is a small hotel, scrupulously clean, where we spent the night. This is the last outpost of Jewish colonisation, being the frontier of Palestine. I observed no downcast faces in that the frontier is drawn at so great a distance from the line indicated by the prophecy: "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." So scrupulous a respect for the Scriptures would have been too much to expect from Versailles. But the more limited territory between Dan and Beer-sheba, Jaffa and Jericho, will keep busy for some centuries a population larger by a million or two than that which now occupies Palestine. My sleep was not perturbed, therefore, by any discontent. Next morning we made for the coast, by way of the groves of Rosh-Pinah and the high mystic city of Safed, and the great valley of olives where the Hittites dwell.

"All the land of the Hittites," said the prophecy, "shall be your coast." But it is preceded by an implied condition: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you." I found





"BUFFALOES SNORTING THROUGH HALF-SUBMERGED NOSTRILS"





it difficult to believe that day that the sole of any Jewish foot had ever touched there before. All that valley from the highlands of Safed to the dunes of Acre seemed virgin Hittite country, though the road cuts down through the heart of Palestine. It is a land which had preserved itself equally from the incidence of ancient prophecy and modern statesmanship, an excluded country. I could have envisioned Jews more easily in the rooms of the most nordic club at Princeton or in the Cardinal's council-chamber at the Vatican. Mile after mile the silent olive-groves extended, aloof from politics, sequestered in their own grey silence. Not a single vehicle passed us upon the journey ; the peasants we encountered seemed rooted to the valley like the olives they tended. Two lads walked beside a herd of goats singing out to each other in a curious flat antiphony, like two birds sharing a secret. Another leaned against a hollow trunk, presiding over a shaggy drove of buffaloes in a pool. The black manes floated like a marish vegetation. The lad did not alter his position as we passed. His eyes followed incuriously. We were strangers. We would not linger, we had no business there. We would leave his world as remote as it had been in the perpetual penumbra of its olives, the air grey and silent, saving for the breath of buffaloes as they snorted through half-submerged nostrils. These people, I learned, were Druses, of whom the mind presents itself so different a picture. Dark legends drift down from the Hauran and Lebanon, of a strange people performing nameless sacrifices. The Druses persist also upon Mount Carmel, a few miles south-

ward, with whom these white-turbaned ones we encountered were doubtless connected. I had not been able to dissociate in my mind the Druses upon Mount Carmel from the priests of Baal summoned thither by Elijah to contend with him in that desperate rivalry. Such wild tales do travellers among the Druses tell, of the initiates, the *akils*, that slash themselves in ecstasy with all manner of weapons, that the mind with a fearful sort of delight repairs again to the picture in Kings: "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

But there was no sign to be seen among these grave men and lads in the olive-groves that they so slashed themselves, that they abased themselves before images of procreation in their secret temples, the *khalwas*, that they performed nameless sacrifices and passed the blood of their victims in skulls from hand to hand. Their faces were smooth and decorous, their manners remote. We spoke with one of them, an old man, a shepherd leading his sheep. He was tall and stately, and held a peeled branch in his left hand like a sceptre. He wore the white turban of his blameless life, a close-fitting black coat that skirted out behind his spotless white pants. He was not one of those learned Druses who have discovered so surprisingly that they are descended from a crusading family, the counts of Dreux, and are stated to have mysterious subterranean connections with the Rosicrucian mysteries. But he looked more like a Norman gentleman than a phallolotrous fanatic. It was certainly impossible to believe

that he was descended from one of those unhappy priests of Baal who had escaped Elijah's notice in the bloody welter of the slaughter by the brook Kishon.

We halted at mid-day in the market-place of the village of Mejd-el-Kouroum, the headquarters of this subsidiary family of Druses. Though we were already hungry and very thirsty, it had been our intention to continue so far as Haifa, or Acre, at least; but it was impossible to resist the bright eyes of the maidens at the well. The Druses are a sort of Puritans among Syrian peoples, and the men are not expected to pamper their flesh with wine or tobacco, nor their women to corrupt it further by the exhibition of their limbs in silks and trinkets. The girls of Mejd-el-Kouroum, however, do not forswear the wearing of gold coins in their dark hair and countless bracelets along their arms. With enormous urns of water on their heads they stand chattering for hours by the well, and then go off to their homes at length, swaying slightly like birch saplings. They have teeth whiter than any white doves in a dove-cot. Their feet are small, with silver anklets clasping them. They have bright eyes. The daughters of Druses should not have such bright eyes. They bade us enter a *khan*, a square house without beauty, in the open space fronting the fountain. So we sat down upon stools and they disposed themselves, old and young, about us on mats. We slaked our thirst in great tumblers of white *leben*, which is thickly-curdled goat's milk, not any whiter than the teeth of these maidens. They brought us eggs also and thin rounds of unleavened bread so that we might celebrate a

belated Passover. They stared about us and whispered and smiled as if we were the first visitors to penetrate the seclusion of that land. An old woman in a corner, her hair and the palms of her hands dyed bright-red with henna, darned a hole in a shabby piece of blue cloth with fingers nimble as mice. She had not less nimbly painted the rims of her eyes. She was the presiding genius of the place, though she talked little. "Coffee," she commanded. A youth arose and passed out of the great square room into an arched inner chamber, much older, and beautifully built. A goat and an ass drooped in opposite corners, nibbling some juiceless stalks disconsolately. Chickens curtseyed from light to shade over the threshold. The sacks of corn gleaned by the husbandmen of Mejd-el-Kouroum were piled up between the ass and the goat that sniffed towards them yearningly, and returned again to their pale heaps of stalks. Half a dozen clay water-vases, shapely as Greek urns, awaited the moment when a village maiden, coming from the well, tripped with her dripping burden. An unlikely moment. Though the water-vases swayed and swung in the rhythm of their movements, as a branch sways in a wind, they were poised as securely as vases in the glass case of a museum. The youth by now had got the charcoal glowing in the three-pronged shard by the threshold, just within the shadow, where the sun might not discourage it. He brought it to the boil three times in three long-handled jugs of brass, damascened with copper and silver. He leaned over it with a testing-cup in his left hand, as intent as a young priest upon a complex rite he has



just mastered. Beside his feet the brass tray waited, laden with our cups. A little soot fell on them, and he spat upon them delicately to remove the reproach. He spat also upon each of the successive jugs and wiped them over his heart on a white under-garment. An odour of this perfectly distilled coffee rose to my nostrils, and so purely, so absolutely the odour of coffee it was, that it seemed a strange scent, never before experienced. I realised rather that I had never smelled coffee before. So we returned into the larger room, with the tray and the cups and this elixir. And it seemed to me that though much might be said for my race, the Jews, it could not be doubted that they sucked tea through cubes of sugar; whereas this people produced this thing, coffee it might be crudely called. A liquid it was not, for it was not merely fluid. Nor was it a solid, for you did not divide it with a spoon. A gas almost, an emanation.

No, the Hittites of the valley of olives must abide here. The Jew has not set his foot in this place, so that it is excluded from the prophecy. They must abide here, the girls with such bright eyes, the young men with their neat hands, and the mysterious old lady directing them as they draw water in the well or distil coffee in the inner chamber, whilst she sits silently in the corner, on her heap of rugs, crowned with her crown of flaming henna hair.

While we were sipping our coffee the *mukhtar* of the village came in. He is a sort of mayor, the representative of the villagers in matters pertaining to the government. He emphasised the impression we had

all along received of the remoteness of these people, so helpless he looked, so forlorn, with an official document in his hand. He might have been more at home, you thought, with a clay tablet, in the manner of the earlier Hittites. He turned the document right and left, under and over. It was, we discovered, a "Summons to Parties" requesting the poor, puzzled gentleman to appear in a civil action at Acre. He had not himself sinned. One of the villagers had not paid his taxes. The *mukhtar*, however, was responsible. He looked at us helplessly, and then looked down at the document again with the same sort of tired distaste as the goat and the ass had manifested for their equally sapless stalks. He sat down to a large tumbler of *leben*, in which he proceeded to curdle his sorrows. We asked him what he would think if a Jewish colony would establish itself in the more barren steadings of his valley.

"Jews?" he asked vaguely. "Oh yes, Jews!" he said.

We recalled the reported fulminations of the Arabs upon hearing the news of a Jewish homeland to be established in Palestine. We recalled the reports of Arab "pogroms" of Jews in Jaffa and Jerusalem. We did not doubt them. We merely realised how factitious they were, what deliberate mischief.

"Jews!" said the *mukhtar*. The news might just have percolated to him through his olive-groves that a wandering tribe, Chabiri by name (to us known as Hebrews), after wandering about the Sinai desert for forty years, had at last been sighted in Moab, on the

farther side of Jordan. And how would it please him if a Jewish colony established itself here? Oh yes, why not? But it would be difficult. You see, the lands are divided into small parcels. There would be more difficulty with these—the ones from England. He tapped the document in his hand resentfully. Perhaps, sometime . . . it was all on the knees of Allah.

As we discoursed thus over our coffee, a husbandman came in, a tall and silent person, wearing his white Druse turban. The girls ceased their prattling. They made as if to cover their eyes under their shawls. A man of great esteem for piety, he took himself to the corner farthest from us all, and sat down on a heap of straw mats. Again the old lady uttered a few curt syllables. The youth went over to a cupboard let into the wall, and drew thence a pot of honey and some bread and a tumbler of *leben*. This man was holy, an *akil*. Especial food must be set aside for him, for the food of the common folk, the *jabels*, might have some impurity upon it. The man finished his repast in silence, drew some money from a hidden wallet, and went on his way. The maidens lifted the rims of their shawls from their foreheads and made play with their eyes again. At this moment I drew a notebook from my pocket, as unostentatiously as I might, in order to make a note or two, and trace the line of a face or an arm, perhaps. But the movement had not escaped the eyes of the old women. The girls prattled on; she pondered me with her eyes. Then she uttered a word again. A girl rose and went out into the village. She came back a minute later with a small child, sniffing

and wheezing, and set the child before me. I looked up from my notebook, puzzled.

"Cure her!" bade the old woman. My friend interpreted.

"But what—I mean how——"

"Don't you see? You're a doctor. What other explanation can there be for you, with that notebook and those horn-rimmed glasses? Cure her!"

"But I—tell her——" I proceeded to remonstrate.

"But you must! Do something professional!" It seemed impossible to avoid a white hypocrisy. It would have been wicked. The girls, the *mukhtar*, the coffee-maker, stared at me with gaping mouths. The old woman waited. I put my hand out vaguely towards the child's wrist, who thereon emitted a loud howl, repeated at once in the further room by the goat whinnying, the ass braying, and the clucking of all the hens.

"Quiet!" bade the old woman.

The child stopped abruptly, like the ticking of a watch when you hurl it against a wall. I felt her pulse. That certainly was proper. I placed my hand on her brow. I warmed to my task. I had, after all, certain medical qualifications. They had given me, at the age of fifteen, a Boy Scout's First Aid Certificate. My conscience shuddered a little. I stifled it. How many of our afflictions are cured rather by the awe of the trappings of medicine than by its pure science? I had a vision of myself on a high chair in a tall, dark, expensive room, of the moaning of innumerable wheels, of blue



lights fleeing out of my finger-tips, sparks, cracklings, more wheels, more sparks. Alas that I had no such equipment in the valley of olives! But I could feel a pulse and contemplate a watch with the next man. And could it be doubted that quinine would be of use in the case of slight fever and sniffing? "Quinine!" I bade, the same being brought from the minute medical store in the pocket of my rucksack.

"Bring Ali!" ordered the old woman. Ali was brought, a manifest case of stomach-ache. Or if it was a more subtle complaint, as it might have been, can it have harmed him that his chest was tapped (I had grown so bold as that) and cascara sagrada was prescribed for him? A pageant of the village sick defiled before me. A case of jaundice was amongst these—if a face dirty-yellow as the hide of a smoked ham is a certain symptom. I declared, regretfully, this was beyond the scope of my ministrations. This young man must betake himself to Haifa, where there are doctors of the Jews.

"The Jews!" the *mukhtar* caught up. "Will they have jaundice-curiers amongst them, if they come into our valley?"

"There certainly are jaundice-curiers in the other valleys!" I said.

"But are none of these of help?" intimated the yellow sufferer wistfully. He pointed to my diminished phials of quinine, aspirin, and cascara sagrada. There was least left of the quinine, for that could be harmful in no circumstances in this region; there was rather less aspirin than cascara sagrada, for I had discovered



earlier, among the Tunisian tribes, that aspirin was more potent in its good suggestions than the other drug, in so much as it was more mysterious in its effects.

“And now,” said my friend, “we must be going !” There was a jingle of coin in his pockets.

“No ! no !” cried the old woman, rising from her heap of rugs. “Give me !” She seized the remaining phials, stuffed them into her bosom, and squatted upon her rugs again.

“Let them go !” she said. She turned her mind in upon itself. We were dismissed from her world.

The bright-eyed maidens gathered about us. They had white teeth, like the snows of Hermon. The bracelets clanked upon their naked ankles—these lovely daughters of the Hittites, at the heart of the valley of grey olives. We went on our way again, down to the coast-land, the fringe of the ancient sea.

## II

We emerged at the edge of the excluded country into a blaze of sunshine, like a triple tournament, where sea and sands and sky crossed swords almost audibly. The extreme points of the blades came off momentarily in that onslaught, winked for a moment in the small troughs of the waves and spun down to the sea-bed, where they still burned, unextinguished. A hard bright world it was, and that city of the Gentiles, that city as little Jewish as the Vatican, Acre of so much cruelty, was its metropolis. At the foot of the clock tower of





ACRE, IN THE ENCLOSED COUNTRY

Jezzar Pasha, at the point where a thousand sword-tips of sunlight intersected, an old woman squatted on her hams, begging. She was shrouded in black like a funeral monument. Her lean cupped hand extended from the black draperies like a carved bough. I dropped a coin into her hand, wondering whether she might not truly be petrified there. With a creaking like the noise a false limb makes in its socket, the other arm of the old woman drew her black veil aside. Grey and corpse-like in the insolent sun, a noseless hag stared at us. I shuddered. My knees trembled. "A holy lady," murmured my friend, who is learned in these matters. "A daughter of St Clare." "How holy?" I asked sickly. "Over six hundred years ago," said he, "the Saracens were marching upon the city to rout out the Christian dogs that had bayed the moon in Acre for a whole infidel century. The Christians in Acre knew that doom was upon them. Many fled. But the Sisters of Clare, foremothers of this black creature, the noseless one, would not so lightly leave the place where Paul's sainted foot had trodden and the early Christians gathered about him to hear news of his wanderings. They stayed. They knew what men these Muslims were, what delicate palates they had for female flesh. They cut their noses off, in the hope that, noseless, they might be permitted still to haunt the city Paul had hallowed. They had not, alas, underestimated the delicacy of the Muslim palate. So outraged were the Muslims upon entering the city to see good meat so wantonly defaced and every miserable lady standing in a growing pool of her own blood, that they finished

the work the good ladies had started and chopped all their heads off."

"Are you suggesting," I said, "that this poor creature did also deliberately——"

"I suggest nothing," he said. "If you have no sense of historic continuity, I cannot provide you with one."

"But is it not just as likely that this old woman suffered for just an opposite reason? That she aggravated her charms with henna and spikeward to enchant some Christian infidel, and her husband surprised that evil love-making, and hacked off her nose, as cuckolded Muslims are wont to do, they tell me?"

"Anywhere but in Acre," he insisted, stubbornly.

"There might be less romantic explanations for her malady. I met a sheikh who had no nose proceeding to his tents in the Matmata country which is in Libya. He was very proud of his condition. A white girl in Tunis——"

"This is Acre," he insisted, "not the Matmata country. There has been much lopping of noses and cutting off of ears in Acre."

The old lady had so pained and so outraged me, lifting aside her veil from the hollow infamy of her almost exposed skull, that still my mind plunged stupidly farther and farther from Acre—Syria, Africa, in the hope that it might thus dispel this present nightmare.

"Lopping off of ears? Vau Gogh," I said, "had no Syrian blood?"

"It has not been decided," he replied. "The



case of Chaim Farhi is better authenticated. He was a Jew, serving the metropolis of the Jewless land. I approve of your own expression—‘the excluded country.’ I approve of your comparison between Acre and the Vatican. But does history record any land or town or corporation that excluded the Jew generic and was not impelled to include the Jew particular? Let me tell you, then, of the included Jew, Chaim Farhi, the Jew of Acre. He was, you must know, the servant of the flint-hearted Pasha, Achmed el Jezzar. That was his tower, where the old woman squatted. Come away. You look green in this hard sunlight. It is more garish than the limes of a cheap theatre. This is the way to his mosque. It does not interest you? You have already developed a dislike for him? I don’t wonder. They called him the Butcher. He betrayed his master, one of the gallantest chiefs in the history of this town, the Sheikh Daher el Amer, and reigned in his stead. It is Jezzar Pasha who has the fame of having thwarted Napoleon when he besieged Acre in the campaigns of 1799. But it was the Jew, Chaim Farhi. He it was who robbed Napoleon of Cairo and Bagdad; for, as you know, if Acre had fallen to him, all the East would have unrolled itself before his feet, like a carpet. A more diplomatic Attila, a more resplendent Tamburlaine, all the empires between Samarkand and Peking——”

“The sunlight of Acre affects my complexion less seriously than your imagination. The Jew, Chaim Farhi, you were saying ——”

“I was saying that Chaim Farhi was more respon-

sible than the Pasha or his English ally, Sidney Smith, for the defeat of Napoleon before those ancient walls. You may just see the mouldering battlements there, beyond those palm-trees. Think of Napoleon gnashing his teeth. Think of Chaim Farhi adjusting his phylacteries. He was a pious man, it has been said, though he was no stranger to high politics. His father before him, Saul Farhi, was minister to the treasury at Damascus. And Napoleon, finding the gnashing of his teeth no more profitable than all his battering at the impregnable fortress, attempted a little subtle bribery instead. But Chaim was not to be bribed. He felt he owed it, perhaps to the spirit of that earlier Maccabæan, Simon by name, who had attempted to capture the town in the year 163, and failed, that he himself must defend the town, and not fail. The phylacteries of Chaim were more resolute than Malta, more unshakable than the Pyramids. Napoleon raised the siege. The Corsican would not supplant Brahma at Benares nor grow pig-tails in his palace at Peking. Chaim Farhi turned to his devotions.

“But there was something about him that his master did not like. It was, of course, unforgivable that people should be attributing to the Jew the credit for the defence of Acre. For a Jew, by incontrovertible reasoning, is nothing more than a Jew. And what sort of an impression would the admiral, Sidney Smith, carry back with him to England, if a Jew were allowed . . . ? And the fellow was so damned handsome, the puppy ! *He'd* show him handsome ! the insolence of the vile Jew ! They didn't call him Butcher for nothing.

“So he had one of Chaim Farhi’s eyes taken out, to teach him manners. The air of Acre, you understand, the Acre tradition. Farhi was touchingly grateful that his master had thought fit to leave him one eye. He redoubled his zeal and loyalty. He belonged to that older order of Jew whom your Kinglake encountered, though he was a very distinguished specimen—‘Jews offering services, and receiving blows.’ They are not like that nowadays, at Kfar Gileadi and Metullah. But Farhi with one eye was still more attractive than Jezzar Pasha, in the gazelle eyes of the Syrian maidens. He had a jaunty way of hiding the gouged-out socket by cocking his turban down over one ear. He was quite irresistible, a Valentino of the eastern world.

“It was a mistake; he realised it. But short of removing the other eye for himself, he hardly knew what there was to be done about it. Jezzar’s business would suffer seriously if he did, or if Jezzar did it for him. He began to hope that things might remain as they were, when some malignant fellow told Jezzar Pasha the story of the Sisters of St Clare and their noses. Jezzar howled with laughter. He thought it the funniest joke he had heard for years. And then he sent his representative over to Chaim, with a knife and his compliments, and the Jew’s nose went the way of his right eye. If Chaim had been anything of a gallant among the ladies, there can be no doubt his career in that direction was now definitely at an end. He devoted himself with so much more zest to the cause of the humorous Pasha that that gentleman’s peers in Aleppo and Smyrna must have gravely considered the question

whether a ruler may get everything that he is worth out of his vizier whilst he still retains possession of his nose. Jezzar died and Chaim supervised his burial with great piety. He must have felt a certain sense of relief, despite his almost pathological attachment to the dead comedian. He was not himself destined to such graceful obsequies. In due course, one of his own disciples, Abdullah, took over the reins of office, and it was expected by the Jews of Acre, and doubtless by Chaim himself, that, noseless and eyeless though it must be, he might now look forward to a golden old age. It is a sad tale, a sad tale (sighed my friend). Abdullah had him assassinated in 1820—a year before Napoleon died, though I attach no special importance to that fact. He had long lost his beauty. It was not on that score that Abdullah tied the stone round his neck and hurled him into the sea—just beyond the ramparts there. He committed the unpardonable crime of persisting in his loyalty and intelligence.

“All that was over a hundred years ago. The good old times. God bless the Turks! And Lord Allenby! Yes, Lord Allenby, with even more vigour. Shall we sit down and have coffee here, on one of these small rush stools?”

“I feel,” said I, “a sort of frost-bite at the bridge of the nose and at the edge of the ears.”

“The sun is very strong,” he said. “It often affects——”

“I do not like,” I insisted, “the atmosphere of Acre nor the local customs.”

We swung forth along the sea’s edge over the small

hillocks heaped by the water and the large dunes heaped by the wind. We swung forth out of the excluded country. The Bay of Acre slashes the level coast-line like the scimitar of Jezzar Pasha. Beyond the bay's curve, the terraces of Haifa climb against the long ridge of Carmel. The ships ride at anchor in the roadstead, out in the middle sea. Their decks are crowded with pioneers, who have set forth from Ekaterinoslav and from Oil City. Chaim Farhi has come forth out of the sea again. There is no stone about his neck. He has both eyes and all his features intact. The bread that Abdullah Pasha cast upon the waters is come back after many days. The Jew included in the excluded country has joined his own people.



CHAPTER XVII  
THE COMMANDER OF THE BATH

I

THE days that followed the secrecy and remoteness of the Valley of the Jews were urban days—days of newspapers and stations and ships unloading and labour bureaux, of great designs begun and greater meditated, of the New World and the Old World in mortal encounter. For this is the final impression left upon the traveller by Haifa, Jaffa, Tel Aviv, these cities with their backs upon the ancient lands and their faces set towards the smoky waterways beyond their ancient sea.

“If I were called upon,” wrote the late High Commissioner for Palestine, “to express in a single word the distinguishing character of Palestine, I should say Diversity—diversity of religions, diversity of civilisation, diversity of climate, diversity of physical characteristics.” But the diversity resolved itself into a simpler concept as I moved among the alleys of the old town in Haifa, and climbed out of them to the thriving new suburbs upon the slopes of Mount Carmel; as I gazed upon some torpid Muslim in a café squatting over his *narghile*, some ear-locked Jew at an open window shaking over his prayers, and turned my eye from these to the efficient engineers taking up their

shifts at the Rutenberg Power-Station or the Nesher Cement Works. The diversity, I say, resolved itself into a simpler concept. I beheld Palestine divided between the New World and the Old World ; between, on the one hand, the most progressive principles of advanced America and Russia, and on the other hand, the most retrogressive nihilism of passive Arabia. I realised as I looked down from Carmel upon the city of no mean past history and of a future grandiose as any in the Near East (if the signs do not lie), I realised that there was a spiritual clearage in Palestine as complete and decisive as that physical chasm where Jordan hurries his sunken waters. I perceived how facile a simplification it was to divide Palestine between old Muslim, the legacy of Saladin, and new Jew, the offering of Weizmann. There is also a new Muslim and an old Jew. I discussed the pictures of Gleizes and the omissions in the "Souvenirs sur Marcel Proust" of Robert Dreyfus, with a very twentieth-century Arab orange-grower in a café at Haifa. Within a stone's throw of this café, in a petrol-tin hut on the edge of a waste croft, I discussed, less theoretically, the practice of polygamy with a decrepit Jewish gentleman from Mesopotamia, with one turban and two wives. All other conflicts in Palestine now are superficial or factitious, the conflicts between races or creeds, labour and capital, country-dweller and town-dweller. Palestine once more is a battle-ground, as of old time, but the armies carry in their vanguard now neither Jewish Star nor Roman Eagle, neither Cross nor Crescent. These fight for the motor-tractor, those for the wooden

plough. A writer recently traced the lines of a cosmic war, which he defined as the Revolt against Europe—in which sense, rightly or wrongly, America was included as the most flourishing of the European provinces. The war was being fought in many fronts and on some the day had been lost already—Riffs in Morocco, Druses in Syria, lateral fronts in Afghanistan and Asia Minor. It seems likely that Palestine will once again be Armageddon, here where the forces of inertia and of progress are interlocked. And the Staff Headquarters of the first are established in reed hutments on the marshes of Huleh, and of the second in those electric power-stations so stern, strict, sufficient, and so beautiful, already constructed at Haifa and Jaffa, shortly to be set up by Jisr-el-Mujamieh and by the walls of Tiberias on Galilee.

## II

It is not to be wondered at that, in Haifa, the mind betakes itself to this pinnacle of philosophic contemplation. The dwellers there are braced by the twofold inspiration of sea and mountain, which combine so freshly nowhere else in Palestine. They are impressed by the magnificence of their future destiny, but they are men of intellect and proportion; they are not tongue-tied by it. They are proud to think of the great oil-pipes which are to bring the oil of Mosul to their quay-side vats when the harbour-makers have done their work; when at last they have provided the coast of Palestine with that safe anchorage which the

Near-Eastern merchantmen have yearned for since earliest antiquity, and some of them have endeavoured to construct in this place and that place, only to find that rigid coast-line and those slapping seas and those sifting sands too much for their utmost endeavours. They are proud of their potential oil-pipes. They blush with modest importance at the thought of that extension of the railway-line to Beirut which is bound to make Haifa the most important railway-junction in the Near East. An exponent of its splendours has discovered the potent fact that "Haifa lies exactly at the midpoint of the route from London to India, and is at an equal distance from the coasts of Eastern Asia and Australia on the one side and those of North and South America on the other." The inferences are obvious, and no one can remain in that bright and busy air for a few days without being convinced that the inferences will achieve themselves. There is so much brain and so much sunlight in Haifa. The working-men have built themselves by the sea's edge a sort of palace of the intellect, the grey brain expressed in terms of concrete and cement. It would seem as appropriate a dwelling-place for a company of young Einsteinians cogitating the hypotheses of their master, as for these lusty, bright-eyed, bare-thighed youths who come in and put down their names for the next job of stone-breaking or house-painting that might be vacant. An open-air theatre is in process of erection alongside. Prague and Moscow will bow their provincial heads before it when it begins operations. I grow faint to think of what severe masterpieces in the ultimate drama



will be presented here; whether the protagonists will not be incarnations of the binomial theorem pursuing their interlocking tragedies to some unimaginable mathematical consummation, or whether it will not be considered *vieux jeu* to have anything at all happening on the stage, just vulgarly happening. Will not the spectators sit sternly upon the concrete seats, their elbows upon their knees, the first finger stuck contemplatively into their cheeks? Will not each man for himself conceive for himself his own play behind shut eyes, thus sublimely liberating himself from the tyranny of the commercial drama? Not for nothing will it be said of him that he is at earth's navel, at an equal distance from the coasts of Eastern Asia and Australia on the one side and those of North and South America on the other. He will not deny his responsibilities.

I met, as I have said, both Jews and Muslim Arabs in Haifa who had a consciousness of their city's pivotal position in future history. It is only the poor Christian Arab who does not rise to the occasion. So I realised in the bathing-huts by the little breakwater. A tall negro from the Soudan presides over them—a miracle of tact, as a man must be in that delicate position. For as soon as the rather too few single cabins are occupied, it is necessary to combine other candidates in groups in larger cabins, and finally to herd large communities together into halls. The negro from the Soudan who presides over the bathing-huts in Haifa is more fastidiously aware of fine shades in caste and theology than any other public official in Palestine. He knows what a land it is of cliques and coteries within the limits of



companies that seem quite homogeneous to the less acute eye. Anybody can see for himself that here are Jews, here are Muslims, here are Christians. But it is the duty of the Soudanese to perceive subtler cleavages. He will not combine two orthodox Muslims with two Wahhabis, if it can be helped, though these are obviously to be united with less discomfort than two Wahhabis and two Coptic Christians. If a student from the St George's school in Jerusalem pants for the cool sea, it were wise not to pen him up with a blonde Lutheran, though these will mix less disastrously than a Mizrachi rabbi and that same blonde Lutheran. The negro is well aware that modern Jewry in Palestine consists broadly of two æsthetic schools—the schools of Jerusalem and of Tel Aviv; but within these communities are the German group and the American group and the Polish, the Rumanian, the English, the Czech groups. He knows the gentle way the English and American Jews have of referring to all other groups as “foreigners.” I am not certain that the gentleman has time to philosophise upon these matters; whether he considers that it is inevitable that these minor and major hostilities shall exist of necessity for some generations, till the rather silly barriers collapse in the wind and the sun and the rains, and a congruous Judeo-Palestinian type is evolved. I do not think he turns his attentions to the more teleological consideration as to what will happen when this same Jewish type is evolved with respect to the other principal Palestinian types. Will he, being the fresh and forceful person he is obviously destined

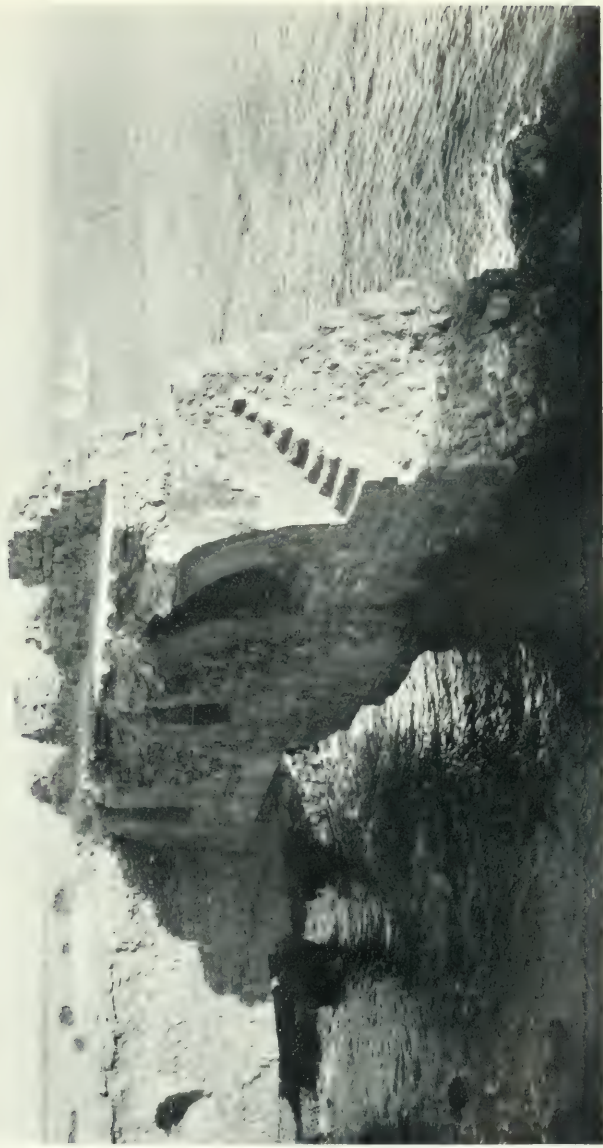
to be, attract to himself centripetally other less forceful types, as he assuredly did during his earlier occupation of this country? Will he be modified not less than he will modify?

Will he? Will he not? No, the negro from the Soudan does not perplex his woolly pate with the problems of futurity. His job is to combine the bathers into groups which will not tear each other's beards out to the glory of God and the damage of the furniture. Ashkenazic Jews with Ashkenazic Jews he combines them, Sephardic with Sephardic, so long as it remains practicable; those Jews also with their fellows, who drink China tea in the Brondesbury manner, so that they might not mingle with them from Bialostok who suck it through cubes of sugar. But the time comes when these flimsier considerations must be disregarded. Tea-suckers and tea-sippers must disrobe together. Not less two Muslims of the established dispensation with two stern Wahhabis, though in theory these be compelled to slaughter these same degenerates there and then, not less relentlessly than any Christian dog. The negro from the Soudan must disregard these points of dogma, as the pressure on his space increases.

But what to do with the Christian Arabs? For they look neither like this thing nor that thing, and they are few, and they are poor?

"This way," he says tentatively. "Here are no Muslims." He throws open a door. The Jews stand there putting shirts on or taking shirts off. The Christian Arabs are pale with fury.

"This way," says the large negro hopefully. "Here



SEA WALL OF ACRE - THE EDGE OF THE EXCLUDED COUNTRY



are no Jews." He throws open a door. This time it is not their sense of race but their sense of creed which is outraged. The Christian Arabs are pale and furious. The negro from the Soudan, master of theology, splitter of other people's fine hairs, scratches his own woolly thatch. Who would be a commander of the bath in Palestine? Perhaps his great-grandson will find it a less harassing occupation.

In very truth, I hope and believe so. I do not deplore these cliques and coteries which cause my negro friend so much philosophic perturbation. They are the sauce of the Palestinian ragôut.

But they will not endure for ever. The little Jews from Hampstead and the little Jews from Brooklyn will in two or three generations think it not less noble that the plains of Sharon nourished them and their limbs were strengthened on the high hills of Galilee. Upon the anvil of Palestine the disparate metals will be fused into a glowing unity.

And the Arabs? Will a man prophesy an adhesion to the ranks of Jewry comparable to the Chazar miracle in the eighth century of the first Christian millennium? Will any man be so witless as to stand prophesying upon a hill-top in Palestine? The ancient and the present competition are too disheartening, and yet a man in these regions cannot resist the temptation. Over a glass of tea he is impelled to metaphysic, and at the steering wheel of a Ford van to the hazards of eschatology. Who then will be the latter-day Balan of the Arabs, remote image of that Tartar Balan who led his people over from Tartary to Zion? Will the



affair again be so incredible, so sensationally fantastic, that, though it be sober history, it shall for centuries be deemed a myth like this earlier conversion? Or will it not happen at all? Will the slow tenacity of Islam grip even Israel? Will they add Muhammed to a later canon of the Torah? Or will Israel and Islam alike subscribe to the tenets of ethical culture, and upon the Sabbath day—Wednesday, probably, to avoid argument—pay their devotions to a pair of sacred compasses embedded in a bar of soap?

It is all very puzzling. Perhaps I had best leave the matter in the hands of the negro from the Soudan who presides over the baths at Haifa.

### III

The Christian Arabs of Palestine, as I have tried to indicate, do not mix easily. But I have encountered more than one Jew who found the Jewish life a little too undiluted. I record the fact without grief or pleasure. It is to be expected that the fervours of converts shall not always withstand the chilling airs of time. The mournful tale was told me of a passionate American family in Tel Aviv which had converted to Zion from the father to the last born babe. They went singing about the streets of the Jewish town in the glory of treading Jewish macadam and escaping death at the hands of Jewish chauffeurs. The father waved his walking-stick, the babe shook his rattle. The daughters that had so obliquely slid through the

tangled steps of the Yale Blues, the Black Bottom, or whatsoever dance was the latest rage in Minneapolis, now rotated exuberantly in the Hora upon the festival of Purim, in the square over against the big newspaper kiosk. Almost, in the rapture of her return to the land of her remotest fathers, the mother shore off her glossy hair and covered the nipped ends with a wig. But, as it fortunately happened, it was pointed out to her by scholars that the cutting off by a woman of her hair was a mediæval practice, suitable to the Russian ghettos, but much to be deplored in this bright land. Had not the singer of the song which was Solomon's, pronounced the hair of his beloved to be like a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead? Did he not proclaim that the head upon her was like Carmel and the hair of her head like purple? Was it to be conceived that it was for a wig he sang these praises?

The mother of the family from Minneapolis kept her hair upon her head. The father waved his walking-stick. The daughters danced the Hora. The baby shook his rattle. But the summer came, and a great thirst befell the family from Minneapolis. And they walked up and down the thoroughfares of Tel Aviv looking for some assuagement of their thirst. But there was only tea with lemon, which is efficient, but it was not their idea of a thirst-quencher. And the walking-stick wavered in the hands of the father, and the maidens dropped dispiritedly out of their place in the Hora, and the rattle slid from between the fingers of the baby. And they looked into each other's eyes

furtively, and a signal passed between them, and they made preparations and stole at dead of night to Jaffa to the water's edge. And there a ship was waiting out in the roadstead. And they scrambled secretly over the deck railings and so were transported to America, to Minneapolis.

For in Minneapolis they might obtain ice-cream-soda and assuage their thirst thus.

Which they did. But the tragedy of this tale follows now, and its moral likewise. For when they attained mid-ocean they crossed another ship, and this was faring to the Holy Land, even to Jaffa. And on board this ship was a gentleman, from Minneapolis also, and he bore with him all the devices for the making of ice-cream-soda, which he shortly set up in Tel Aviv, so that none from Minneapolis, nor from Cincinnati, nor from Chicago, might be consumed with thirst for ice-cream-soda and forswear his loyalties.

And this tale, it seems to me, has not only a tragedy, but a moral also, not so subtle that I need expound it.

As I have said, there are times when a wave of nostalgia besets the Jews in Zion for the things and people of the Gentiles, and this would be no trustworthy chronicle were such moods also not chronicled, in addition to the moods of self-sacrifice and exaltation. That evening, for instance, in a Jewish hotel on the lofty suburb called Hadar-Hacarmel, on the slope of the mountain, I beheld a wistful instance of this. For it chanced that I had met a friend of mine, a Gentile, who is much given to wandering in eastern parts, and I have run up against him more than once during my

adventures among these ancient seas. He is not unhandsome, certain women have told me. Other women have been more definite. He is handsome, they have said. He has one of those stern chins which appeal to them, and a leg. And grey eyes, but such grey eyes as could only stare out of a Gentile skull. If life had not made a wanderer of him, he might have sung masterful songs in provincial revues, and fluttered the bosoms of more Jewish maidens than that night in Haifa. For I asked him to dine with me there, and I assured him that no stranger food would be presented to him than we had partaken of in Sicily at Castelmola, or that strange afternoon of absinthe and shell-fish at Itea, of all places, which is in Greece. Not that it would be straight sailing, I said; chopped herring, for instance, with minced egg and liver. And there might be fish prepared in that paradoxical Jewish mode—sweet and sour, it is called—in which extremes are subtly reconciled. And there would be carrot for pudding treated in a certain esoteric manner which would make it much less odious than it sounded.

He became my guest duly, and I attribute to the fact that he found the Jewish cooking either more or less palatable than I had led him to expect, that he remained unaware of the curious unease his presence caused among certain of the ladies of Judea. I had myself advanced so far as the *lockshen* soup, by which Jews denote soup of vermicelli, before I became aware of these certain maidens, how they had no appetite for their dinner that night. Now their eyes stole towards our table, now they returned to their plates,



which they contemplated with a Gorgon-like fixity. It was not, I decided very speedily, I that caused this disturbance. Like any self-respecting mortal, I have my vanities, but they do not lie in the direction of the belief that my appearance in dining-rooms decomposes the appetite of lady diners. It was my friend, my Gentile friend. But his negotiation of the stuffed neck of chicken monopolised his attentions. "Do you," he asked fearfully, "eat the skin? Or do you shave it first?"

He would not perceive, therefore, how the fingers of the maidens—of certain of the maidens—faltered with their forks. And not maidens, merely. Even the matrons (I cannot permit myself to disguise the fact)—even one or two of the matrons were less interested in their dinner than was their wont. I am convinced I should not have been discountenanced even by this discovery. Their husbands were by their side, and it was their concern, not mine. It was only when I made a further discovery that I felt disconcerted and troubled. Maidens and matrons are old enough to decide their own destinies. But when I realised that a small girl, aged eight perhaps, was making the most unmistakable signs towards my Gentile friend, winking with the left eye and with the right eye, erecting first the thumb of the left hand and then the thumb of the right hand—then it was that I felt I could not remain passive. I knew that the little Jewish girl is more precocious than her Gentile sister; I knew that the sun of Palestine might tend to emphasise her precocity. But to wink first with the left eye and then with the



right eye, at the age of eight—no, that is too much, I said.

So I moved my chair several inches, not too obtrusively, but quite firmly, intending thus to interpose my bulk between the small girl and the object of her cajoleries. I found it difficult not to betray my chagrin when the small girl proceeded promptly to change places with her mother. By this time not even my friend was in ignorance of the situation, and embarrassed though he was, he did not perceive what other course of conduct he might adopt but to reciprocate the signals, in an elderly, hearty manner, as he might be a favourite uncle. The situation having reached that point, the small girl of a sudden lost interest. To me that seemed the most surprising evidence of her precocity, for it is well known that the sophisticated woman only retains interest in her quarry so long as he betrays no interest in her. But this was a child and no woman, the odious little minx, I fumed inwardly. What this child needs is to be put over her mother's knees and spanked soundly till she proclaims that henceforth nothing but skipping-ropes and dolls will interest her. It was embarrassing, moreover, for my friend, who was suspended uncomfortably in mid-air, smiling thitherwards where no smile returned to him. The mother apparently divined the situation. From her own eyes and white teeth the smile flashed back to him—as a mother smiles, I said to myself, over the follies of her children. But no, I said a moment later, it is not that sort of smile. Nor was it, I was just as surely aware, the smile of philandery.

I could conceive no lady of whom it might more properly be said she was a very nice lady.

The meal ended in a moment or two, and I became aware of just what sort of smile it was. For the lady, basing her action upon their reciprocity of smiles, changed over to our table. The child disappeared. I was aware that the child had been no more than an agent. The child had no interest more adult than dolls and skipping-ropes. But the nice lady sat down to our table and, completely disregarding me, plunged into a breathless conversation with my friend, the Gentile. She smiled the whole time, this mournful smile of nostalgia for the Gentile world, for a secluded pool of ice-cream-soda in this raging river of tea with lemon.

The nice lady of Haifa may suppress this nostalgia ; or like other returners to Palestine, male and female, she might succumb to it. She might turn her back upon Zion and make her way back to Minneapolis. It has happened not a few times. The Jews are such that it will always happen. But if this lady of Haifa shall yield in the end, she is better in her own place. She is not of the stuff of that bright-eyed hefty girl who sat upon a heap of stones by Afuleh, and smashed them, lustily singing. Nor of that tall lady of Jisr among the exhalations, who is sallow with malaria, thin as a reed, and strong as any oak. Nor the poetess of Rehoboth who is frail as the flowers of frost and ardent as the noonday sun. She is not of their company. Let her not linger here.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ÆSTHETIC

THE time it takes to travel between any two cities in Palestine is rarely more than half a day, yet all history and all philosophy lie between Jericho, for instance, and Tel Aviv. It is significant of the new dispensation that whereas the ancient cities, like Beisan or Gaza, looked out towards the desert traffic of Mesopotamia or Sinai, the new cities whose growth during the last few years has been so extraordinary, are planted upon the sea's edge, looking out towards Europe and the western world.

Between any two cities other than Haifa and Jaffa, the discovery that no decent road connected them would promptly have impelled my rucksack upon my shoulders, my stick into my hand, and my feet upon whatsoever sandy waste and gritty stubble separated journey's beginning from journey's end. But that proceeding seemed to me hostile to the spirit of these westward-looking cities. Even to cover the intervening space on a train seemed a little Victorian. Moreover, it was hot. It had become exceedingly hot. Perhaps that had also as much to do with it. I took the train for Jaffa and Tel Aviv.

There was a "crisis" on in Tel Aviv. I do not wish to underestimate its gravity, nor, on the other

hand, to analyse its causes, to discuss measures of prophylaxis. Far more discerning students of social economy have lent to those tasks more educated pens than mine. I want to record only that I found it a living city, warm, excited, and intelligent. It was a Jewish city. "Hebrew—read Hebrew!" bade the stern notices under the glass table-tops of the Hungarian café. "Speak Hebrew!" proclaimed a small boy darkly into my ears, as, somewhat timidly, I asked my companion in English if English marmalade was to be bought in Tel Aviv—that sort which has no shreds. It comes from Oxford. Molten it is out of sunbeams playing upon the meadows of kingcups by Godstow.

In my pension in Jerusalem I had demanded English marmalade, for I am willing to suffer most mortifications of the flesh, but it is more than I can manage to resist this lambent sort of marmalade, should it be available. I in a beleaguered city, surrounded by women and small children reduced to a diet of rats' tails, surrounded by women and small children who turn their beseeching eyes upon me, who lift their hands to me, cry out faintly to me: "Marmalade! Spare us some of your marmalade!"—I in that beleaguered city would turn a deaf ear and a sticky mouth to them. I should yield no marmalade. That is the sort of person I am. I can do nothing about it. And in my pension in Jerusalem, when the landlady brought me English marmalade, even though in the shops of the Jews much compôte was to be bought hashed out of Jewish orchards—such an outcry was made by my Jewish

co-pensionnaires that passers-by believed that Jews were slaughtering Arabs in that house, or Arabs were slaughtering Jews. And I had done no more than order and receive English marmalade.

Which I did again in Tel Aviv; and "Speak Hebrew!" the small boy said darkly into my ear. And so did posters upon the walls and texts upon the eating-houses. "Strangers you were," said these, "in the land of Egypt. Be citizens in the land of Israel!"

It is possible that the injunction to speak Hebrew in Jewish Palestine is partly based on an æsthetic reaction from the sort of English which is spoken there, and set up in shop signs, and printed in handbills. I cannot forbear from quoting certain specimens of Palestine English—it might be termed Tel Aviv English—in support of my theory. As for instance the following professional door-plates: "Slaughterer Who Kills Himself Every Morning," "Certified English Lady," "Diplomatic Midwife." I approve of the modest tailor who announces that he "Cuts Trousers Straight." I am an enthusiast for the mixed-goods merchant who "Sells here Hosiery, Stockings, and other Musical Instruments." But my chief loyalty goes to that candid surgeon who blazons these words upon his front door: "Women and other Infernal Diseases attended to."

But in the early morning the sleeper awakens in Tel Aviv to more authentic voices. The sing-song of the devout rises to his casement from the small synagogues, where the old men intone the morning service. In Hebrew the milkman upon his rounds cries out his



milk. In Hebrew the crossing-sweepers dispute the gutters. In Hebrew the boy cyclists swear at the charioteers of the watering-carts, who do twice daily water the streets of Tel Aviv, so ample is the water there. In Hebrew the very cocks crow, the motor-horns hoot, the acacia-leaves whisper in the boulevards.

And Tel Aviv is the home of Chaim Bialik, the greatest of modern writers in Hebrew; it is the gathering-place of the artists—Rubin and Newman, Melnikoff and Lubin. There is no doubt of the Hebrew accent of the errand-boy, the scavenger, the journalist, the poet. Will the Jewish painters at length evolve a Hebrew art? “Will they?” I wondered, wandering among the streets and houses that might have had a certain Jewish distinctiveness if the money-getters at Tel Aviv had not taken matters into their own hands. “Will they?” I asked again. I examined their pictures. I looked at their sculpture. Was I false to all my æsthetic theories to believe such a thing as a Jewish art was no contradiction in terms? I sat down to a cup of coffee, almost Arab in its excellence, in the café called “Haginah”—The Garden. I pondered the question. “Hebrew—speak Hebrew!” insisted the poster on the wall. And the artists? Will they? Can they?

Here as I sat in Tel Aviv on the fringe of the warm sea, a memory came back to me of a cold inland town. I remembered how in Berlin once before I had pondered the question and come to no decision. Would these young men painting in Palestine decide it for me?

It was a long time ago, the Erste Russische Kunstausstellung had only a few days earlier startled into derision or terror the gross apathy of Berlin, where the price of milk and the quality of bread were far more potent preoccupations than the relations of matter within pictorial space. The exhibition tolerantly extended so far back as to include even the demoded reactionaries of 1916, and it extended so far forward as to include the painters and sculptors whom the theorists of 2023 were to discuss as reverently as we our own pioneers, Niccolò Pisano and Giotto. In fact, the most incredibly advanced Soviet artists rubbed shoulders with such primitives as Chagall and Kandinsky. When the Secretary of the Exhibition informed me that the emissaries from the Soviet Ministry of Art were not averse from meeting me, and that they were none other than Altmann and Gabo, whose theatre-decoration and sculpture had already so bludgeoned my jaded vision, I braced myself up stalwartly. I anticipated two young men lurching like moujiks and wild-eyed as Shelley. I apprehended crude red ties flapping like banners about their heads, and knee-boots climbing monumental thighs.

Never in Chelsea nor in the Villa Borghese in Rome have I met artists more urbane and correct, nor of more exquisite manners. We stood before a theatre poster by Altmann where two bold lines of Hebrew lettering marched across the design. We were a company of five gathered from the last ends of the world—two artists from Soviet Russia, a bronzed and handsome colonel from Australia (such as our Miss Dell might

immortalise), a business man from America (such as Mr Sinclair Lewis has immortalised), and a young writer from England, who was myself. A more or less theoretical discussion upon the merits of the design was in progress, when suddenly the American business man, whom mere æsthetics had not interested, gave tongue. Clear and faultlessly he read out the line from Altmann's Hebrew inscription. It had all the incantatory resonance of spectacled little boys in Hebrew schools upon dusking Saturday afternoons.

"Guess you don't know what language that is, colonel?" he inquired from my Australian friend.

"And what might it be?"

"Assyrian," replied the American gentleman (looking a little dubiously towards me), "Assyrian!"

"Rum thing!" murmured the colonel. You could not have conceived an ice-blue chin nor any nose more Anglo-Saxon than the colonel's, nor eyes more ingenuous. "Et ego in Assyria!" Then he, too, gave tongue and concluded the recitation of the Hebrew inscription. So have I heard my uncle, Reb Yossel, chant his blessings before meals.

"Shalom Aleichem!" said America, unabashed.

"Aleichem Shalom!" replied Australia.

At last my opportunity had arrived. The political position of the Jews under the Soviet did not enthrall me half as much as the relation of the Jews with Soviet art. "Fünf Juden, ja?" I stated succinctly, to sum up the situation. Altmann and Gabo did not dissent. Then I posed my questions. What effect had the abolition of racial and religious taboo upon art, and upon Jewish



FROM THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM: THE VERY SYMBOLS OF  
HEBRAISM PRESENTED AS THE TRAPPINGS OF  
SOME MINOR HELLENE CULT

Plate XIII.





art? Under the new ordinance, could a Jewish artist feel such an inspiration from his background, physical or spiritual, as a Robert Frost in America or a Charles Doughty in England?

But the Soviet artists looked away from me with displeasure, almost with distrust. "There is no Jewish art," they said, sombrely. "There is only art."

"But, at least," I followed on wistfully, "there is art by Jews."

The Russians were silent. The American was bored. The Australian stroked his ice-blue chin reflectively.

"There is no art by Jews," he said, "only Assyrians!"

I wondered whether he expressed the truth of it, in his perverse antipodean manner. I wondered again this day in Tel Aviv. I wondered if he would revise his opinion should he come to this city. And would he find it strengthened, perhaps, by the contemplation of the ruins of the Galilean synagogues some leagues northward. For I recalled the carved fragments which are established at Capernaum and elsewhere along the shores of the lake; and there, where you would have expected the Jewish architects in the charged Hebraic air to produce a mode of building and decoration quite specifically Jewish if anywhere in the world, you saw Hellenism excelling itself. You saw the very symbols of Hebraism, seven-branched candlesticks and shields of David and palm-trees of Tabernacles—all these were presented as the odd trappings of some minor

Hellene cult, a suburban Apollo, a parish-pump Demeter.

It is a great responsibility the young Jewish painters in Palestine are loading their palettes with, the responsibility of creating a Jewish art.

Can they? Will they? I sipped my coffee ruminatively. "Hebrew—speak Hebrew!" proclaimed the texts unremittingly.

Is there to be discovered a specifically Jewish art in the art of Jews in any place, in any modern time at all? I have looked for it in vain, but I have looked in the wrong places—London, Paris, Munich. Vilna and Lodz would have been likelier areas, the intense Pale of Eastern Europe where these artists now working in Palestine have sprung. And when two or three generations have embedded their transplanted roots into the soil which originally nurtured them, will the question be answered at length, or will they merely practise Paris still in Tel Aviv, as the Hellenists practised Corinth in Capernaum?

Is there a Jewish art to be encountered in Western Europe and America, or the work, merely, of Jewish artists? You will find an intensity always, a feverish and bold experimentalism in mode. But the actual presentation of new matter hacked out of the crude original quarries? That was the question I asked myself that day in Unter den Linden, despite the disclaimer of my friends from the Soviet. Did I remember the puppet plays of Kreymborg? Then my mind went back to the repertory of the Teatro dei Piccoli in Rome, to the performance of "Guarda, Guarda, la Mostarda."

Did I recall Epstein? What of Maillol then? In Budapest I had seen a synagogue of the most beautiful proportions and elaborated in the most cunning traceries. But what if the Saracens had never laboured? In Prague how profoundly impressed I had been by the cemetery there, the most memorable of Jewish cemeteries in the world. There was any amount of skill and fine simplicity in the grapes or pitchers or stags chiselled on the tombstones. But what tradition did it, or could it, establish, this tender little side-path from the main European tradition? Here finally among the Russian sculptors and painters, the most brilliant of the academists or the suprematists were Jews, but only the most brilliant of them, not their captains, their originators.

. . . And at that moment Gabo led me to a strange distorted complex of steel lines and springs, plucking like a claw into the void. He then wound up the contraption with a key and set the phantasm moaning and gesticulating. It played with its own frenzied shadows as an obsessed mind with its fears.

"And this, what is this?" I asked, weakly. Then Gabo propounded. How long has sculpture been imprisoned in the strait waistcoat of a static conception! Ever since the lamentable Greeks petrified the art into a glaring immobility, the world's servile sculptors have accepted the limitation without demur. An art essentially of movement . . .

"The Wingéd Victory of Samothrace?" (from me diffident).

"Precisely. The whole history of art holds no

greater self-contradiction. Here is stone simulating movement. Here is movement groaning for emancipation out of the fetters of stone. The Greek could not even be loyal to his own premises."

"What, then, is the error of Praxiteles, Verrocchio, Michelangelo?"

"Sculpture with them exists only in space. It has egregiously divorced itself from one dimension, and the most important. My own sculpture, the sculpture of the future, exists not only in space, but in time. It changes its own component relations and its relations with the spectator during every moment of its activity. Is not the spectator's mind a river rather than a morass?"

"But your sculpture is bound to run down, like a clock, or a gramophone?"

"Then it must be wound up again. The winding key is no more mechanical an agency than the eye itself, the engine of vision. Tell them in London and New York . . ."

"If you permit yourself the dissipation, has this piece of sculpture a name?"

"Aber freilich. It is called 'War Memorial'!"

I present his conception to you. There was a moment when the first Jew attained the astounding heaven-shattering conception of the One-God. He must have lain stupefied for days at the prodigiousness of the thought. What, then, of a dynamic sculpture, which unifies Time and Space into indivisible essence? Here, have we a Jew at length who shall be esteemed one of the great originals of art?

The business man from America was murmuring, "Say, bo, what about the Kineema?" The colonel from Australia was saying softly, "But why little steel springs? Why not flesh and bone? In other words, what about dancing?"

But I led the young Jewish visionary safe from the sphere of their impertinence.

I wondered that day in Berlin whether a young Jew, in the strict nightmare of the Soviet, had at last created a Jewish art. But in the pellucid air of Tel Aviv, looking towards the bronze-green groves of orange and lazunite line of sea, in this keen undeluding sunlight, I fear it seemed less a Jewish art than a Jewish trick. And not so much a Jewish trick, as a trick merely. It is for them to ask and answer, Rubin of Tel Aviv, Newman of Jerusalem. Or rather they must neither ask nor answer. They must paint. They must build. They must compose their harmonies. We ask no more than that. But we ask that not less urgently than the ploughing of the fields and the subduing of the spring-time torrents. They are the fulfilment of each other.



CHAPTER XIX  
THE PROTO-ZIONIST MYSTERY

JAFFA presented me with another problem, not of an æsthetic nature like Tel Aviv—nothing so simple as that—but a problem in history, sociology, racial hygiene, the variation of hereditary characteristics, and a score of other mystic sciences. It was there that I definitely arrived at the conclusion that for all its radiant atmosphere, Palestine is a place of mystery, the most occult land in the world. I do not mean merely that the ebony face of an Abyssinian bishop is a sealed Ka'aba of secrecy, or that the place is mysterious because you must stare through a keyhole if you would set eyes on Abraham's tomb in Hebron. That is a child's-play secrecy. Nor do I mean merely that the air is full of intrigue and whispers—financial, political, sectarian, social. No. I mean mystery, not mere mystification. Things are not what they seem, not knowing themselves what they are, whither they lead, from what origins sprung. So many traditions, so many races, such diverse influences, compose any single entity. St George of England and of Jaffa, is he no more than a mere Muslim saint or is he, in point of fact, the august Perseus who freed Andromeda? And that Scottish sergeant of police who speaks Hebrew under Herod's Gate? . . .

But I will confine myself to Jaffa. For it was a mystery that Jaffa presented me with that I carried away from Palestine as typical of all this mystery, this impermeable heart of darkness insensitive to that fierce sun.

In an Arab café in Jaffa I met him, over against the fountain set up by the good Pasha, Aba Nabût. And I went over to him cordially, for he was my dear friend, I thought, though I could not make out how he had travelled so far. "El-Arabi!" I cried, opening out my arms. But the tall dark gentleman looked away from me blankly. I knew I had made a mistake. I flushed and sat down, and hoped that he and the waiter had imagined I had done no more than order a *narghile*. I cleared my throat and cried "*Narghile!*" again, in the tone of one who wonders whether he must order a thing a sixth or a seventh time before his wish will be attended to.

I looked at the false El-Arabi through the corner of my eye and marvelled how two men could be so similar. I had taken him to be El-Arabi, that singer of great repute among the bazaars of Cairo and the Nile oases, whose acquaintance I had had the honour of making one night on my journey to Zion by way of the House of Bondage. Upon that night a certain Sidi Ali Hussein gave a grand concert at his own café preparatory to making the pilgrimage to Mecca. He had impounded the services of El-Arabi and his troupe of singers and musicians so that a great crowd might be attracted and much money collected to assist him on his pious intention. Thus it was I met El-Arabi and

we had much conversation together and he sang the songs of Egypt for me, which were slightly easier to understand in the Arabic than in the English he translated them into. Now I knew that El-Arabi had great fame and travelled far, and some days later must be in Zagazig in the Nile Delta, and that he had made much money and wore a diamond on his middle finger as big as a plover's egg.

But I was astounded to find he went so far afoot as Jaffa ; and that was why I did not pause to examine his middle finger before I opened my arms out to him ; but he did not wear any diamond on his middle finger, though he made up for it, I was to discover, by four large frontal gold teeth. And his name was not El-Arabi, and I ordered a *narghile* and felt very stupid.

Yet, curiously enough, his name was El-Amerikani and he was mystery, he was the mystery incarnate of Palestine. The Egyptian mystery of El-Arabi, all the mystery of Egypt, is theatrical, and a man can see through it when he gets the hang of the hieroglyphs. But the mystery of Palestine is not a thing of properties, of beetles, and bulls, and hawk-heads. It is a thing in the grain of the spirit. It is curious and subtle. And as for El-Amerikani, I can find no better instance of what I mean, even though another American gentleman, by name John Franklin Swift, and at one time resident in the city of San Francisco, has at the same time solved the mystery of El-Amerikani. And left it where it was before.

You observe I said of Mr Franklin Swift that he was "another American gentleman"; by which I imply,

and in uttering his name I clearly state, that the tall dark Arab in the café at Jaffa was also an American.

He was. He occasionally called himself Mr Adams, at the same time as his associates called him Muhammed, which he himself amplified from time to time into Abd el Fattah Ali Muhammed. I also discovered that he was a Jew, in some special apocalyptic sense he was a Jew, a sense not unconnected with the fact that he was an American, by name Mr Adams. And in that same sense, so far as I could gather, he was more quintessentially a Jew than I, who am no more than a mere Jew.

I confess. It is all becoming a little complicated. But I started out by stating that Palestine is a place of mystery, and it was not only in the company of El-Amerikani in the café at Jaffa that I looked out wild-eyed on a world of bewilderment. But when my friend—for I ought to say that El-Amerikani and I became friendly the same afternoon—made out that he was more really a Jew than I, I began to have an idea of where I might be. For as I knew that there are earnest bodies of Aryan Christians who are convinced on the most flawless reasoning that they are the True Israelites, so it seemed to me very logical and proper that there should be certain sects of Semitic Muslims (with headquarters, perhaps, in Jaffa) who are convinced that they too are the Lost Ten Tribes. I could imagine the Semitic Muslims publishing pamphlets like those masterly productions of the Aryan Christians, in which they point out that whilst they are Israelites, they have no connection with Jews. From that point

it was only a step farther to conceive a grand Pan-Israelite Alliance of Muslims and Christians, whose main platform of agreement would be the doctrine that the only people in the world who are definitely not Jews are the Jews.

Now the issue was to prove that it was precisely in the millenaral sense that El-Amerikani was a Jew. Yet he duly made all the Muslim protestations at the mosque of *Jami-el-Mahmûdêyeh* on Fridays, and on his left forearm he had a cross tattooed. Excepting for the fact that when I met him subsequently he chewed chewing-gum, steadily, but without appreciation (an oblation, I was to discover later, to the shade of his ancestor from Missouri), he was not to be distinguished from the fellaheen who assist the Jewish colonists of the region in their rough labour. He laid claim to the Urim and Thummim, but he wore nothing more exalted than the *keffiyeh*, which is the loose covering of coloured cloth the Arabs wear on their heads, bound round with a rope of camel's hair.

It is possible that I am interpreting his pretensions too amply in the light of the discovery I was to make a month or two later of the more-than-Jewish proto-Zionists of Jaffa. But the fact is he was certainly called, and certainly called himself, by the name of El-Amerikani, in certain moods of cryptic retrospection. He said also his name was Adams, or so I now interpret the sound, for the Arabic dental is puzzling to the Western ear and he suffered from the suspicion of a cleft palate.

Perhaps it was that cleft palate which prevented



me from pre-bodying my great discovery, for it made his Arabic difficult and his English more difficult than his Arabic. What was he driving at, the gold-toothed enigma, through the tortuous implications of his chewing-gum? What was all this? Jews? Americans? Jesus Christ? Only one God and Muhammed is his Prophet? Oh, sirrah, what theology have we here? And our father which was in Jaffa . . . Adams . . .

And to me, quite casually turning the pages of a forgotten book of travels in the threepenny dip of a provincial book-shop lately, upon my return to England, the whole astounding truth became manifest. And with what a blare of the trumpets of Revelation! And what an unfolding of Zion's blue and white banners, of American stars and stripes! And Antichrist, Loenthal by name, how he gnashed his yellow teeth!

The book is entitled, too flippantly, "Going to Jericho," the author being a Mr John Franklin Swift, a business man from San Francisco, and the date of publication, 1868. He was under no illusions about his book . . . "as I am not vain enough to think my book will be read by posterity at all" . . . he remarks wistfully in his preface. And indeed the latest, and the last, of his readers was about to replace the volume with a sigh from the theological debris out of which he had raised it, when a name and a place suddenly thrust themselves forth from the yellowed pages, and a vision and noises asserted themselves beyond the name and the place.

Adams . . . Jaffa.

I saw the café over against the mosque and the date-

palms over against the sea. I saw the gold teeth and the tattooed cross. I heard the *narghile* bubbling and the cleft palate seeking to enunciate the secrets it harboured. And I hugged the book to my bosom and carried it to my room, and there I undid the latchet of the sandal from the foot of El-Amerikani the tall, dark, gold-toothed one, and I bathed his feet in perfumes for the sake of his progenitor, the proto-Zionist, the more-than-Jew, the Rev. H. G. Adams, to whom the call of the Lord came in Maine, in Washington County, in the year 1859 of the present era; and the call came to Mrs Adams and to one hundred and seventy souls. But whether Mrs Adams or any of the attendant ladies was the grandmother or great-grandmother of Abd el Fattah Ali Muhammed, known also as El-Amerikani, I cannot pretend to decide. I am inclined to doubt it.

The importance of the Rev. H. G. Adams in the history of Zionism has been overlooked. He is the true founder of these Judean colonies which encircle the old town and the new town of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Alongside of Charles Netter at Mikveh Israel and the Baron Rothschild at Rishon-le-Zion his portrait should hang too. Before those aboriginal colonists, the Chovevi Zion, thrust in the hoe, he had turned up the soil with Johnson's patent shifting mold-board and gang-plow. He is the Pilgrim Father of Tel Aviv. No Daniel Deronda inspired him nor Emma Lazarus fired his blood. The angel of the Lord spake in Maine, in Washington County, and Mr Adams hearkened. But no candles are lit for him upon his *jahrzeit*, the day

of the anniversary of his death. No wreath of eucalyptus-leaves binds his sculptured bust. His name endures only in the pages of Mr Swift, in the defective palate of his grandson (or it may be his great-grandson), who sits in the café against the fountain of Abu Nabûl in Jaffa, only dimly aware of the Messianic glory of which he is the inheritor. Is it too late then to light for him this poor taper? But the taper is Mr John Franklin Swift's of San Francisco. I do no more than bring a match to it.

It was in Maine, as I have said once or twice, that the Word came to the Rev. Adams. A distinguished lady was his wife, the granddaughter of a signatory to the Declaration of Independence. The blissful couple abode for a time in St Louis, Missouri, unperturbed by memories of the lady's first husband (for the lady had married previously, not divining to how sacrosanct a union she was to be appointed later). Removing thence to Washington County, the Word fell upon them, in the year 1859. In precisely ten years the Messiah was to arise in Israel, to lead his people back to Zion. It was obvious (Mr Adams pointed out to our traveller) that he must "immediately set about preparing the Holy Land in advance for the great change, for it was clear to every American that the country in its present condition was not a fit place for the residence of the Jews, nor for the reign of the Messiah; that it was not reasonable to expect the Jews, with all their shrewdness, to return to a country such as Palestine was in its present state, nor was it quite certain that the Messiah himself would come unless great changes

for the better were at least commenced ; that his call was to plant the great and glorious institutions and introduce the wonderful agricultural inventions of our land into the future home of the chosen people of God ; that the true method of civilising the people of the Sharon valley was to teach them to turn up the soil with Johnson's patent shifting mold-board and gang-plow ; to plant grain with Smith's remarkable double-back-action drill, and to harvest the fruits of the earth with somebody else's wonderful combined self-adjusting reaping, thrashing, sacking, grinding, and bolting machine."

It will be seen how perfect an anticipation of the severest modern American Zionism this is, how accurate a prognosis of what they term there the Brandeis formula. Here is no windy novelist's nonsense of dumping the natives beyond the farther prairies of Transjordan ; no such rosy bubbles as little theatre guilds and universities. A vision was this of shifting mold-boards and gang-plows, of drills and reapers, to the glory of the Lord and the well-being of Israel.

The tale does not lack its Judas, its Lucifer—a Jewish gentleman named Loenthal, a consular agent in Jaffa. According to the representations of Mrs Adams, this serpent had been too wily to prepare to oppose the entry of the proto-Zionists by force of arms, or by calumny to turn the Sublime Porte against them. He conceived a more evil and more profitable plan. "He had simply worked himself into the confidence of the simple-hearted President, the Rev. H. G. Adams,

upon the occasion of his first visit to the East, at a time when that functionary was unaided by the wisdom of Mrs Adams (she being left in charge of the infant flock in Maine), and getting hold of the funds of the society as agent for the purchase of lands, embezzled the money." So it was that when these devoted philo-semites arrived, with their frame houses in the hold ready for immediate erection, they found neither money nor land awaiting them, and themselves as poor as the apostles of an earlier Teacher, when he summoned them to his service.

If these late words are destined to repair the wrongs of history, and to establish Mr Adams and his wife, even at this remote day, among the captains of Zionism, it would be wrong to omit the vivid portrait of Mrs Adams presented by Mr Franklin Swift. (For I myself can do nothing in the direction of portraying the good woman. El-Amerikani, my friend at the café, seems to transmit the lineaments of some other grandmother, or great-grandmother.) She was "a large-sized lady, with a decided military manner, her age anywhere between thirty-three and fifty. Her fine head was set well back on her shoulders, so that her chest and chin were perhaps more prominent than her nose or eyes. This gave her the appearance of looking down at you from under her glasses, as if from a great distance. The first thing the lady did after seeing us was to order us into the parlor. This she did with a commanding sweep of the hand that I suspect Queen Victoria would have envied." Thereon she made a speech, in a technique later to be adopted by the more



patriotic American Zionists, to the effect that the American eagle of freedom had with one grand swoop winged his glorious flight from the newest to the oldest land of the earth, to rest upon the mountain peaks of Syria. Before sitting down, she assured her listeners not only that the eyes of England were upon her, but that Louis Napoleon, the Emperor of the French, was becoming quite uneasy, and anxious to know what was the real design of the American colony in settling in Palestine.

There was a dark lining to this cloud of splendour, and the core of the darkness was the Jew, Loenthal. What can have been the object of the nefarious Loenthal in thus opposing himself to the celestial scheme which was to make Palestine a country fit for Jews to live in? I see in him the prototype of those Jewish opponents to Zionism who are its most implacable enemies to this day. Consular agent though he might be, I do not picture him as a Jew in the cultural and Mendelssohnian sense, but in the sense rather of those ear-locked and be-caftaned zealots who do, even now, send their children sooner to the schools of the Christian missionaries than of the Zionists; their argument being that the children would be impervious to any such poison as the missionaries could instil into them, whilst they might be dangerously sensitive to the more subtle venom injected by the Zionists.

It is idle to speculate how much more successful the proto-Zionists might have been, if there had been no Loenthal to frustrate them. He seems to have stopped at no infamy. Not merely did he rob the latter-day

Zerubbabel of the funds with which he intended to rebuild the Temple (on some such plan, I take it, as the Agricultural College at Nahalal), but he instigated the poisoning of seventeen of Adam's loyal pilgrims and nourished the poisoner in his bosom.

Mr Loenthal seems to have been no gentleman. But even Mr Adams had his detractors. Upon inquiry at the Franciscan convent, it was stated that he was no more than a common drunkard, if not worse, and that his wife was an unscrupulous woman running this apocalyptic "stunt" (as it would be called to-day) entirely to her own profit. Certainly, what time the faithful disciples were hewing wood for them and drawing water, she "descanted in a loud and majestic voice of the grandeur in which she would entertain guests in her new house when completed." All little Jews would be suffered to come unto her. More than Miriam and Deborah, she would be the prophetess of the Jews, sister of Sarah she would be, Abraham's equal spouse.

Was it entirely due to Loenthal that these visions were not fulfilled? And when the tenth year completed its cycle, and no wind brought the Jews upon its cloak as the locusts on the breath of the *khamsin*, what emotions possessed the bosoms of the Rev. H. G. Adams and Mrs Adams? Was it then that in his melancholy the poor gentleman took to himself the dusky consoler to whom my friend of the café in Jaffa was grandson, or great-grandson? Or had he perhaps, before the fatal decade was achieved, been lured by a bare brown shoulder and a large liquid eye?

And if that were so, was it to be expected that a chaste American lady, the widow of a Southern planter, the granddaughter of a signatory to the Declaration of Independence, could abide such goings on?

What then? Are there no traces left of the proto-Zionists? Other, I mean, than the slightly regrettable Arab-American with four gold teeth who chews chewing-gum? Now it is a strange thing that the air of Jaffa does indeed lend itself to the millenarian fantasy, the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of Heaven. For at this moment, in the place of that American colony, you will find a colony of those serious Germans who call themselves "Templars." It is stated in a wise book that these Templars established themselves here in 1868, having bought up the estate of certain American settlers, who founded their colony in 1856. But that was three years before the call came to the Rev. Adams in Maine, in Washington County. Or is perhaps our traveller from San Francisco inaccurate? I should hate to conclude so, of so successful a business man and honest an observer. The theologians from Wurtemberg, who in 1860 founded the movement, have certain affinities with Jewish dogma. "They came to the conclusion," we learn, "that a really Christian social life was impossible on the basis of the current ideas of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ."

Their main pre-occupation, it will be observed, is with the "really Christian social life." It may be that they are more-than-Christians. But it was the privilege of the Rev. Adams and his company that they were

the proto-Zionists, they were more-than-Jews. They did not split hairs, they clove clods. They had Johnson's patent shifting mold-board and gang-plow sewn in silk upon their banner. They had for a *mezuzah*, a holy amulet, upon their threshold an image of Smith's remarkable double-back-action drill grain-planter.

And nothing is left of them but the tall, dark gum-chewer in the café? The position is not so hopeless. At the colonies of Ramat Gan and Mikveh Israel and Rishon-le-Zion that fringe the yellow dunes by Jaffa there, they most featly press the grape and most powerfully turn up the red earth. At Ness Ziona they gather oranges in baskets. At Nahlat Yehuda they milk cows. They have not made up their minds whether at the end of one decade or a hundred, the Messiah will appear and strike every bare boulder with his rod so that a fountain will leap from it. In the meanwhile they secure their water-supply by laying pipes and digging wells. They plant trees. They make roads. They have not the lambent faith of the Rev. Adams nor are they so eloquent as his lady. They are too busy.

CHAPTER XX  
SINISTER SEA AND TORPID CITY

I

THERE is no land so limitless as Palestine. Where to begin? Where to end? In what abyss of history, upon what peak of prophecy? There is no beginning. There is no end. But time harries, the dogs of the west are at my heels. Shall the pen, like a suspended spider, halt in mid-air in the bright adjacent tumult of Tel Aviv? Or does a wind blow the thin thread hazardously over the foot-hills of the Shephelah and the stark plateaux of Judea to Jerusalem again till the spider hang motionless as a jade deity in the hot torpor of Jericho? A restless land. The mind will not abide anywhere. Hurling now, down from the ramparts of Zion. . . . There is no gainsaying the fancy in Palestine. We must follow where it harries us, to the high snows of Hermon and the stinking pits of Sodom.

Quite suddenly, quite disastrously, the whole world topples over from Zion's towers into the wilderness. A moment earlier to be exalted upon the hill-tops, a moment later to plunge to Hell's gates.

Poor, stricken, unresisting wanderer! You cannot kick in Palestine against this insolence. Follow you must. Here where so fiercely and promptly the road



thrusts its snout downward, along the burning ravines. Immediate desolation! The Arab houses huddle back in terror against the battlements, they will not loosen their hold of their meagre pittance of water, the scant patch of shade afforded them by their single miserable olive-tree. Here and there the rock is scooped out into a baking cavern, where, fifteen centuries ago, some hermit (capable of more frantic austerities than your pampered flesh, O wanderer) gazed downward upon the blazing shield of noon.

The landscape surges up as you descend, like a blow between the temples, like waves of heat made manifest. The hills quiver slightly, like flames. A smoke goes up from their summits.

In the caverns at their bases the tawny lions once lay upon their haunches and licked their hot paws. Their roaring is not now annulled out of the cavern, any more than the sea's roaring out of shells.

There is no meaning in this land. It is not land at all. We have sunken far below the sea's level. We have no right here. This is unholy air. The whole region is nightmare, a region neither of day nor night; the owl is abroad, staring out of agate eyes imperturbably. A lizard swims between the tufted rocks, lifted up on lanky feet, like a bird. A snake twists into a gaping hole. There is no verdure, save a grey-green scrub that twangs in the heat, like wires. The submarine air presses upon it, like a weight of ocean.

Here now the great cleft of the Dead Sea, Lot's Sea, lies spread under us. Here were the evil cities once. Or were they not? Let the wise men say yes or no.

It seems beyond belief now that there shall ever be cities again here, good or evil.

And yet all the cafés in Palestine are full of rumours regarding cities that may, in this latter end of history, arise on these bitter shores. There will be so much salt to be disintegrated, that it may be less useful to carry it away hence than to return it to the waters out of which it was resolved. There will be sodium chloride. There will be magnesium salts. There will be, supremely, potassium chloride.

But the common salt, the table salt, I cannot bear the thought of so sad a doom. Return it to the dead waters again? What? Will the Jewish pioneers need no salt to pot their cucumbers in brine, as they do in green phantasmal jars in the small streets of Dooming-ton, my native city?

A vision recurs to me of the great blinding pans of salt on the north-west coast of Sicily, by the white town of Trapani. There also, upon the neighbouring mountain-top called Eryx, gods not less evil than these of Sodom were worshipped. There was the shrine of the Phœnician Astarte, who took wing to Sicily from the coast-land northward beyond the high plateaux of Galilee. A blight fell on the land, but the hardy Sicilian turned it to some account, and Yarmouth bloaters are salted this day in the salt evaporated from the pans of Trapani. I saw precisely such a scurf of salt spread out in a shallow natural pit beside the Dead Sea. I peeled a thick coat of salt from a forlorn wand on the beach. Establish here your salt-pans and your cities, O Jewish pioneers! The Sicilians shall not

have the lead of you. Over five oceans the herrings open their mute mouths for the holy salt which shall stuff them, so that they may be an offering before meat upon Sabbath evening tables. Over five continents the pallid cucumbers wilt. Let them not have their way, those salt-recusant scientists. Magnesium and potassium chloride are their playthings. Bid them not withhold our salt from us.

The nearer you approach the Dead Sea over the powdery intervening plain, the farther it recedes. In every direction great white sand-storms rotate fantastically upon their axes. The water glimpsed through these unstable columns seems nothing more than mirage. The mountains of Moab beyond the water seem not less insubstantial. What wild creatures stalk upon these precipices ; jackals bark, hyenas howl, the desolate eagle claps his wing.

There, suddenly, the bitter water is at our feet, not a transcendent blue as it seemed on the heights, but a forlorn greyish-green, the water of desolation. A few odd barques loll in the water, to carry who knows what merchandise over from the wild hillmen of Moab. A few Bedouins have set up their habitations here, compounding dry reeds and petrol tins into an idiosyncratic architecture. A Bedouin girl smiles seductively, showing her startling teeth. Her arms are heavy with silver bangles. Her mouth is tattooed cunningly. Practise not your wiles on me, maiden ! I have read in a Book of the daughters of your old cities.

I strip to bathe, and an outraged guardian of the proprieties bids me move a hundred yards away. O

Gomorra! and O Tunbridge Wells! I emerged from the water. A thin, faint, caterwauling gramophone drones out upon the dense noon. All the bells in the entombed cities respond from the shattered belfries.

## II

You will not attempt the return journey to the wilderness without seeking a moment's shade, a moment's ease, in Jericho. Is this a pattern of the sort of cities the scientists will align along the shores of the sea? In the demoralising languors of summer will their citizens decline to this fishy torpor? They must go up to the tops of the hills. This is no air to be breathed by men who would retain stout thews and unclouded eyes. That will be half the problem. Perhaps the railway-line which is to be built along the Jordan Valley will go a long way toward solving it. There must be no more Jerichos.

For Jericho is beyond doubt the most torpid of earth's cities. And the traveller receives that impression not merely because he has but lately descended from Jerusalem, the most austere and exalted of cities; not merely because he has traversed the most sinister of wildernesses and stood upon the edge of the most sinister of seas—and now he suddenly finds himself in the shadow of lush groves. Jericho is a place of a fishy torpor, because it is indeed a sort of aquarium, and the sallow Arabs in this place do indeed open and shut their mouths like fish seen through thick walls of glass. Between these hither mountains of Judea and those





LANDSCAPE ABOVE JERICO : THE WHOLE REGION IS NIGHTMARE



A CACTUS HEDGE





mountains of Moab, the sun's heat lies in level blankets. And how shall it be expected of these listless ones that they should shake the blankets and give the sheets an airing? Hot day succeeds to hot night. A man who sits on a chair in Jericho merely has the sensation he is propped up in bed on a hard pillow. He makes bubbles languidly in the bubble-strewn waters of his *narghile*.

How shall he not be languid, this son of Islam, of which the meaning is : Submission to the Will of God? All his horizon is bounded by wilderness. How can he do anything but submit to wilderness, such dry rock, such barren sand, such juiceless scrub. But the waters that break from the immemorial fountain of Ain-es-Sultan just as effortlessly surround him with groves and gardens and plantations. Fat date-palms shower their solid honey into his lap. Bananas unroll their ragged banners. Oranges light their smoky lamps. Shall a man rebel against such bounties? He lazily scoops a new channel for the warm water, which Elisha purified long ago, in the casting in of a handful of salt. (There are other uses for salt then, O scientists, than the pickling of bloaters and cucumbers. Do not too wantonly cast it away again out of the beds from which you shall extract it. There are more waters to be purified even though Elishas be so few.) Lazily, as I say, the husbandman of Jericho scoops a new channel. Straightway a new date-palm arises or twenty water-melons lie plump along their vine. "Kismet!" he sighs sadly, and bids a glass of his curdled goat's milk be brought to him. But the air of Jericho is so opiate that even the sour milk is sweet. Glory be to Allah!

Jericho was of old time the key to Palestine, in those days when the accent of invasion was east to west. (So it was again when Lawrence of Arabia, that predatory Israelite, harried the poor Canaanites, sent forth spies, blew up bridges.) Hence Joshua needed to conquer Jericho before Canaan might fall to him. He ordered his cohorts, wiry and lean with their desert marches, to walk silently about the city six times, and with a great tumult seven times upon the seventh day ; no wonder the torpid ones of Jericho were affrighted. Who else but supermen, or Jews, would set themselves to march and march again abreast of the molten plates of sunlight that close to against the palm-trees of Jericho ? Jericho fell. Jericho, because it would have been too strenuous not to, rose again. Jericho was beleaguered, once and again. Never in the whole history of Palestine did Jericho withstand a siege. No less than Djerba, away south-westward in the ancient sea, was Jericho an island of lotus-eaters, encompassed by barren wastes. An island of lotus and palm-trees, and orchids like bugles, and the curled vanes of bananas and oranges glowing and purple figs.

No wonder that Antony gave a present of Jericho, the languid city, to Cleopatra, knowing that it could not elsewhere lie more fealty than among the gems and brooches of that opulent bosom.

Would you truly apprehend the spirit of Jericho ? Seek out the young man called Abd el Kidr, who sits at the café in the square all day long. His toes and fingertips are red with the henna which once grew profusely in his city and once decorated the pale, small finger-

nails of Cleopatra. He wears a flower behind his ear. His arms are tattooed with birds and hearts and magic hands. He lifts a cup of coffee to his lips, and it might be an episode in a slow-motion film, so languid it is, and yet so princely a proceeding. But bid him take you to bathe with him in the Sultan's pool. You will indeed think yourself in an aquarium. It seems to him a matter of indifference whether he breathes water or air. His limbs fan either element slowly like the arms of a windmill on a torpid day.

And do they tell me that earthquake has befallen Jericho? It seems to me that even earthquake would not seriously incommode Abd el Kidr. "What is this?" he might ask faintly, as his roof cracked above his head and the mud bricks fell in on him. "What is this? Ah, it must be time for coffee now! And my flower—where is the flower that was behind my ear? Kismet! It was fated! I must go into the gardens and pluck me another one!"

Pluck you another flower, O pillar of delicate indolence, who do, like a caryatid, uphold the fallen roof-beams of Jericho. But the Jews are coming, O Abd el Kidr, they are coming into the sunken world. They come to pluck rarer flowers than those out of the fatal waters. Behold, the railway-tracks are being laid, the pits are being dug, the lathes are being adjusted, the cogs tightened. The Jews are coming, O Jericho, that brought your walls down in a blast of trumpets! The Jews are coming to raise them again in the sound of dynamos!

CHAPTER XXI  
EVENING IN NAZARETH

WHERE, when I remember Palestine, do my thoughts linger? Where to end my tale of those ancient lands? Not in Jericho, nor in Tel Aviv; very strange, for most frequently my thoughts gather, like a flock of doves, and make for Nazareth, that Jewish city.

Now I speak of Nazareth so, not because the Jews have come up from the valley of Esdraelon below and throng the narrow bazaars. Indeed, in the flesh I met only one Jew in Nazareth, and I did not so much meet him as find him beside me, his white blouse gleaming ghostly on the terrace, among the flowers heaped up in petrol tins. Nazareth, I felt, was Mary's town, a pale, sweet, Jewish maiden. Even as Jessie was a little Jewish maiden, she whom I had loved long ago, in the tiny house that neighboured ours, in the ghetto in Doomington.

No, Nazareth was not the city of Jesus. He was but a boy, not yet grown up, not even born yet. Tiberias down upon Galilee was infinitely more the city of Jesus. I do not mean in the fierce archæological sense. His foot never entered there. Capernaum was his city, and Magdala; but you do not conceive him there. There were ruins of earlier civilisations on the lake-shore in the day of Jesus, but he no more frequented



them then, than the mind conceives him now as frequenting the ruins of Capernaum. It is in Tiberias you see him again, watching the fishermen drawing in their nets and turning at dusk towards the synagogues, where he will join his kinsmen at *meyeriv*, the evening prayer. I heard him in the pulpit of the Sephardic synagogue on the Sabbath morning. He had a small skull-cap in his hand. He was tall and lean and dark and vehement. He was a young man. The old men mistrusted him. Through the slits in the woodwork of the women's gallery you saw the women gaping, spellbound. But in the doorway on the ground floor of the synagogue the old men muttered together, their ear-locks shaking.

Tiberias is the city of Jesus, and therefore no proud city, like Rome, which is a Christian city. Nazareth is the city of Mary, the little Jewess.

It was with the remnants of a Galilean fever that I ascended from Tiberias towards the austere hills where the green basin of Nazareth is gently folded. Fever was still in my limbs as I walked about the town the day of my arrival. Hence my memory of Nazareth in the day-time is a bright chaos of camels snarling and bent shoemakers hammering their scarlet shoes and great vaults where carpenters laboured at a craft which, in this town, made priests of them. And set amongst these were abrupt gulfs of shade and oleanders that carried down towards me their boughs laden with pink blossom and hibiscus flaring like a tree of tongues.

But more than all of these, clear and lovely above the bright and dark tumult, I recall a small Arab maiden who had just drawn water from the Well of

Mary. An Arab maiden she was in her blood and a Christian maiden in her creed. But she was a Jewish maiden by virtue of the symbol she was, and the incarnation her flesh had yielded to, little Mary of the Jews of Nazareth. So where this child stood, that earlier child had stood in that same attitude, a great black and red-striped jar upon her head. Her feet, too, were naked, and not less like a dove's. Just so large and lustrous her eyes were. Surely just such a lilac gown and none other, hanging down from her shoulders.

If I had not seen the rest of Nazareth so confusedly through the torn ribbons of heat and fever, I should not have seen the lilac-vestured maiden so clearly take unto herself the whole character of Nazareth, its ancient meaning, its present sweetness. And the Church of the Annunciation would have been for me one of the thousand churches I have entered upon my wayfaring, not a house tended by a maiden. As it might be a Jewish home upon the eve of the Sabbath, and there is a spotless cloth upon the table (and some call it an altar) and there are shining candlesticks upon the cloth (which are altar-lamps to some). And the Jewish maiden whispers the prayer over the steady candle-flames, and places her hands before her eyes, and concludes the prayer. And wine is now to be drunken and bread to be broken. There was no Cross in Mary's house in Nazareth. There were candlesticks and a white cloth, laid for the Sabbath evening.

And so in the cool of the evening I took a certain path out of all the paths that lead from the crowded centre of the town, not knowing why I chose it ; and

so ascended into the olive-groves and the scattered terraces where the labourers live. And I do not know why I should have stepped aside from the rocky path, at a certain threshold, to bid salaam to the peasant seated among his lilies with his cloak folded about his head. For the small girl in the lilac gown was not there at the moment. It was only some minutes later that she appeared out of the secrecy of the garden, like one of its own flowers rendered into a substance less gross, because more diffused, than their own.

"Shalom!" the Arab replied, for the Hebrew word is becoming the word of greeting for all men, and bade me mount the small terrace that fronted the tiny square block of his house. It was with gesture rather than with speech that he thus invited me. I ascended that platform slung out above the valleys of Nazareth and sat down on a reed-plaited, four-legged stool he brought out from the roots of an olive-tree.

So we greeted each other, and so we fell upon silence. And this was the strangeness of that evening, that so much was divined and so little said ; or, as it might be, that so much was said, though so few words were uttered.

A cool wind was blowing from the setting sun, out of the cool sea. A fawn dog, hoarse and unconvinced, barked perfunctorily and barked no longer. As quietly as the first stars came out, the peasants on the farther slopes of the valleys lit scattered fires of waste weeds to be manure for their steadings. The terrace where I sat was banked round with flowers ; it was kinglier than Versailles. About the dark threshold, flowering

shrubs soared out of petrol tins. They were lovelier than all the marble urns of the Roman gardens. Geraniums uttered the very scent of earth. Carnations and petunias, lilies and stocks, made smudges of colour and perfume against the last ridges of western light. Higher than these, a herd of camels going down upon the road to Haifa was outlined exquisitely, like an object carved by a Chinese craftsman out of jade. Their bells across the translucent distances were the phantom of music.

I suppose that in a Palace of Horticulture this peasant's flowers would have made no great show. But I knew as I looked on that old man going about among his flowers, watering them with water from Mary's well, that he loved them more than any millionaire fanatic loved his priceless and incredible orchids. And that was why I was touched as I have rarely been before when he plucked from his flowering trees great burdens of blossoms and loaded my knees with them where I sat, and made a great bouquet of *otra*, that strange and lovely and highly special flower of these regions; which the perfume-makers in the bazaars distil into small phials that you may carry away with you even to Pittsburg or Glasgow this quintessence of eastern perfume.

It was not with words that this old man of Nazareth conveyed to me his great pride in flowers; and not with words, or with very few at most (for he spoke not a syllable of my language and I few of his), that he conveyed to me what grief he sought to assuage by so salvaging petrol tins out of dust heaps, and so en-



chanting them with flowers. But I became aware that the Nazarene girl he had loved as a lad, who became the mother of his children, had died not many months ago. She was Mary by name, as most of the maidens of Nazareth are, not less than they were in the time of Jesus. (I was aware the old man was a Christian. I did not need him to tell me so by unfolding the great white sleeve from his arm to show me the cross tattooed there.) So Mary, his wife, was dead. And to remember and to forget, he banked up the Nazarene earth in tins and planted flowers and made evening fragrant. But the time came when her ghostly voice might not be stilled by the loud ranks of lupins or the scarlet blaring of the pomegranate blossom. And he sat amongst the flowers and he mourned.

So he sat there with his head fallen upon his bosom, and I had neither speech nor wit to drive his sadness from him. And it was at this moment that I was aware of a third person who had joined us upon our high platform among the flowers. His white blouse glowed in the dusk. Down the centre of it and round the neck a pattern of flowers was woven in bright silks of blue and green. He brought a freshness into the heavy exhausted air, faint with too many flowers. His head was uncovered. His knees were bare. He had efficient hands, gnarled and kindly. His bronzed face seemed to give off something of the heat which it had absorbed all day long from the sun in the naked fields.

He was—that was evident—a Jewish colonist from one of the settlements in the Emek below. He did not



so much enter our communion of silence as fulfil it. He may have come from the colony of Beth Alfa or from Ain Charod. I have a feeling that he uttered one of these names. I do not doubt that behind the plough he sings as lustily as his neighbour and in the dining-hut he is as voluble. But silence was upon him here, as upon us. I do not know his name. I think that he had been sent from his group to buy a horse that day in the fair at Nazareth. I am not sure of that. I merely knew that he was the sinews that this poor land lacks, and that the mourning man among his flowers had need of him. I do not know when the Jew from the colony came nor when he went ; for I stayed a long while after him by the Arab's side, looking down from Mary's town upon the twinkling lights of the Jewish colonies as they flickered and burned and were extinguished in the valley of Esdraelon.

The stranger—but he was no stranger—brought with him a freshness and an urgency. The Arab lifted his head from his bosom. He clapped his hands and cried Maria ! For though some of his children had wandered far from him and the others were dead, one remained. And this was none other than the lilac-vestured Mary that came running on bare feet silently on to the terrace, and looked at us, my kinsman from Esdraelon and I, with eyes lustrous even in the dusk-light. It was as if I had known she must be here. I bowed to the frail, minute lady. Jessie, this might have been, my first-love. Or my own mother as a child, when she stood silently among the vines in her father's vineyards.



PLOUGHING . . . HISTORIES FLICKERED AND WERE EXTINGUISHED



GATHERED SHEAVES



Our host uttered a few low words to her. Swifter than we could see, she was away from the terrace where she had stood, and, effortless as a bird, was swinging high in the branches of a laden almond-tree. The tree seemed a miraculous fusion of almond and lilac, putting forth at one moment green nuts and towery blossom. Her black hair swung out behind her head against the ultimate flush of sunset. Sunset was quenched a moment later. A moment later she put a load of clustered almonds on the platter the flowers made for us. Soon, in a charred space beyond an olive-tree, she was kindling twigs, she had a fire burning that lit up the ivory perfection of her face. And now punctiliously, as if it were a rite upon some festival evening, she made coffee for her father and his guests, that her mother should not be shamed. So she blew the twigs, and brought the fragrant stuff to the boil, once and twice, and again a third time. And she poured it out of the brass damascened jug in which she had boiled it, into a small jug, and so into three small cups. So we ate the fresh green almonds, and so sipped that incomparable coffee, faintly tintured with the scent of *otra*. And so we sat among his flowers, this Arab whose sires had long been peasants in Palestine, and this Jew from Esdraelon who had become a peasant in Palestine, and this wanderer from England, looking on the waning fires of weeds on the near slopes and on the growing fires of the colonies in the valley below. The fire-flies wandered between.

So we sat and listened to the silence of Nazareth, the silence of Palestine. I have heard such silence only

once before. It was in Greece, on an evening no less august, no less odorous. Above me the cliffs of Parnassus soared. About me lay the tumbled drums of Apollo's temple in Delphi. Below me the olive-groves hastened towards Itea and the waters of the Gulf of Corinth, tranced in the level moon. Silence in Delphi ; but it was a sepulchral silence, of urns and tombs and cold marble statues. But this silence we listened to and looked out upon in Nazareth was the silence of a land gathering itself together for a new green history. It was the silence of a growing tree.

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